# LEATHERSTOCKING

GEORGE ARTHUR GRAY

Best love

From

Anne Moore

Feb. 6th 1926.

LEATHERSTOCKING

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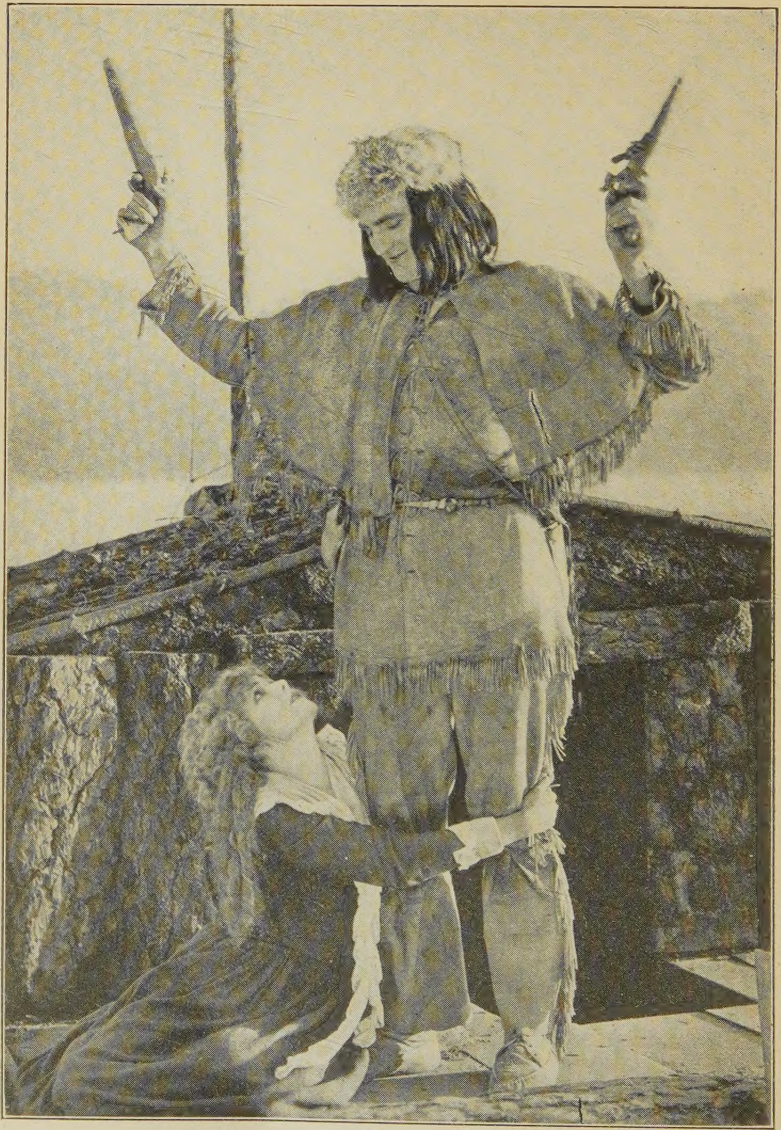

*A Pathé Picture.* *Leatherstocking.*

"NOT THAT!" SHE PLEADED.

# LEATHERSTOCKING

BY

GEORGE ARTHUR GRAY

SUGGESTED BY

J. FENIMORE COOPER'S

LEATHERSTOCKING TALES

ILLUSTRATED WITH SCENES

FROM THE PHOTOPLAY

A PATHÉ SERIAL

GROSSET & DUNLAP

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## WHY IT WAS DONE

A CENTURY ago James Fenimore Cooper gave to the world its first stories of adventure among the Indians. Generations of authors have come and gone, and their works have done likewise, but the passing years seem to have had little effect upon "Leatherstocking Tales," save, perhaps, that of rendering them more alluring as time goes on.

Our grandfathers and our fathers followed with breathless interest the exploits of "Chingachgook," "Uncas," "Natty Bumppo," "Floatin' Tom Hutter," "Hurry Harry March" and all the rest of the picturesque characters that emanated from the Cooper imagination, and even we ourselves are not above an occasional plunge into the romance that they lived.

Cooper was either a genius, or else he was not. It all depends upon the point of view. Our men of letters of a bygone age contended that he was, and they awarded him a place high in American literature. Our sophisticates of to-day are inclined to look down on him

tolerantly and declare in their most patronizing manner that he was vastly overrated. They find fault with his style, with his plot construction, with his characterizations, and possibly with his spelling and handwriting. The fact remains, however, that his novels would still be paying royalties if there were any one to pay them to and if our copyright law covered such a long period, while the works of his critics a hundred years from now will be as little remembered as is the name of the man who bought the first copy of "The Last of the Mohicans."

Popularity of the kind enjoyed by "Leatherstocking Tales" is an asset not to be overlooked by those best qualified to judge its value. Therefore, to-day we find a motion picture presentation of these Cooper stories current on the screens of the country. Cooper's fertile imagination provided plot and incident enough to keep a studio running at full speed for at least five years, but such a procedure would undoubtedly have proved unwise if undertaken. No such attempt was made, but three of the most widely read of the series—"The Deerslayer," "The Last of the Mohicans" and "The Pathfinder"—were culled for their most thrilling and picturesque action, and into this

were introduced the characters that figured in "The Deerslayer." The result is that Cooper's heroes and heroines and villains have been brought to life so that the boys of to-day may actually see the things that were merely paper and printer's ink to those of past generations.

In preparing this novel, no attempt has been made to rewrite or improve upon Cooper. That would indeed be a presumptuous undertaking and one which would fully merit the rebukes that would be certain to follow. Neither was it the plan to follow any one of the stories that make up "Leatherstocking Tales." Like the picture, the novel sought only to group into one story the high lights of the series.

With all respect to Cooper, it must be admitted that he does not provide the easiest reading matter available to the youth of the present day. The fact that certain of his works are "required" in school English courses does not tend to add to his popularity among young readers. Surely, these stories are deserving of a better fate than to fall into the category of study, for that puts them into the same engrossing class with Wentworth's Arithmetic, Wells' Algebra, and kindred works.

This novel, then, is merely an humble effort to put before such boys and girls, and grown-ups, too, for that matter, as may chance to see it, just a sample of the thrill and glamorous adventure that are to be found between the covers of any of Cooper's stories. If it is the means of thus arousing sufficient interest to bring about a rereading of those classics of a century ago, the author will feel well repaid for the effort he has put into it.

G. A. G.

New Rochelle, N. Y.
March 17th, 1924.

# LEATHERSTOCKING

## CHAPTER I

### THE FIRST WARPATH

The late afternoon sun was striving well-nigh in vain to send its beams slantwise through the wall of trees that circled the clearing. Through the rift overhead the deep blue of the August sky seemed to glow with added brightness by reason of the deeper shadow below, and a gentle breeze shook the leafy barrier. A bird shrilled its free forest song and launched its little body towards the heavens in the sheer joy of living, and a gray squirrel scampered out on a bough to look with appraising eyes at that small bit of the world visible from his leaf-bound vantage point.

Peace and the quiet of nature held sway overhead, but below were the never-ending conflict and bickering that follow mankind wherever his venturesome spirit prompts him to go. In that tree-enclosed forum white man and red

had met—not in battle, but in preparation for it. The elders of the Delaware tribe, called together by their chief, the venerable Tamenund, to consider the overtures of the French Commander, were listening in silence to the closing words of the emissaries from Montreal.

His Excellency, Louis Joseph de Montcalm de Saint-Veran, weary of inaction and smarting under the daily affronts of his English enemies who claimed this vast region from Hudson's River to the Great Father of Waters, the Mississippi, had made the stern resolve to sweep down from the North and forever still the boasts of rival claimants. Montcalm had laid his plans well. He had easily won over to his cause the ferocious Hurons and allied them with their brothers of the other Canadian tribes. Now he sought the aid of the Delawares, but the promise of scalps and loot that had worked such wonders with the Huron chiefs aroused no enthusiasm nor battle lust among the Lenni Lenape.

Seated cross-legged on the greensward facing the Delaware council, the four gaudily uniformed officers of Montcalm's army loudly praised the prowess of their red brothers, dwelt at length on the love borne them by the Great White Chief in Montreal and strove with

clever tongues to win their stolid hearers. Since morning the Frenchmen had harangued, and the Delawares had listened with polite attention. At last they had done.

"In the lodges of the Delawares hang the scalps of enemies that prove the prowess of their warriors," concluded the spokesman in the tribal tongue. "Their fires are made brighter with the stories of the young men who go forth to battle and return with the spoils of the victor. They are mighty on the warpath and they strike fear to the hearts of their foes. Thus does the Great Chief at Montreal think of them. With the Delawares as his brothers, he will sweep the thieving English from the land, and the scalps and treasures to be gained by Tamenund's warriors will make them the mightiest of the mighty. Will Tamenund join his French brothers and go forth against the English?"

For a moment the earnest young officer gazed steadily into the eyes of the patriarchal Tamenund, and then he turned his glance to the strange figure that all day long had stood beside the Chief. This individual was not an Indian if facial characteristics went for aught, but he apparently stood high in the councils of the Delawares. Killer-of-the-Deer they

called him, and the fierce eyes with which he glared at the French officer at the conclusion of the plea gave added emphasis to the first word of his name. He turned to the aged chief and was about to speak when Tamenund raised one withered hand to command attention.

"Tamenund and the elders of his tribe have heard the words of their white brothers," he said in a firm voice. "They welcome their white brothers in council and send greeting to the Great Chief in Montreal." Then the voice took on a majesty that awed even the white soldiers from the North: "Tell the Great Chief that the Delawares are not wolves—they do not roam and search for prey! They are not jackals that draw their strength from what the wolf leaves! Since the days when the Great Manitou breathed life into the earth, the Delawares have lived at peace with their neighbors. They seek neither loot nor scalps. Their lodges are places of peace. But never has a Delaware fled when war was waged against him. His tomahawk is ever ready to uphold the honor of his tribe, as his hunting knife is to add to its food store. The Delawares will wield the tomahawk to defend their own lives and their own people, but never will they take the warpath against their white brothers. This

is the reply of the Delawares to the Great Chief. Tamenund has spoken."

The aged chief rose to his feet, signifying that the Council was at an end. Slowly he drew the long robe about his lean shoulders and, closely followed by Killer-of-the-Deer, made his way across the open space and into the narrow path that led to the village on the bank of the river. Tamenund had indeed spoken.

The Frenchmen, disappointed at their failure but relieved by the termination of the tedious conference, left the circle without speaking, mounted their horses and rode away into the forest. Montcalm's advance must be undertaken without the aid of the Delawares.

But the end was not yet. Tamenund was as crafty as he was mighty. The French had failed in their efforts to enlist the Delawares, but might they not succeed with the other tribes along the Mohawk? If they should, how long could the Delawares continue to live at peace with their neighbors? These questions presented themselves to the patriarch of the Delawares as he made his way back to the village, and his mind, long trained in the crude statecraft of his people, evolved a plan to offset the wiles of the Great White Chief of the French. Tamenund halted and, turning to the

young man who had kept pace with him, said:

"My son, our white brothers speak with honeyed tongues. To the Delawares their words are as the whistling of the wind through the leafless tree, but we know not the minds of others. Near the lake they call Glimmerglass are the wigwams of many tribes friendly to us. You shall take them the message of Tamenund. Tell them that the truth is not in the promises of those who would have them take the warpath, and bid them heed the counsel of the Lenni Lenape that peace may continue over our hunting grounds.

"The Killer-of-the-Deer is swift of foot and he knows the secrets of the great forest. He can gain the waters of the Otsego while the messengers of the Great White Chief are still seeking a path for their horses. Go, with the message of Tamenund."

The young man made no answer, but the old chief knew that his instructions would be carried out to the letter, for in the village of the Delawares none was looked upon with greater confidence than he whom they called Killer-of-the-Deer. He was a white man—or, rather, a white youth, for he was not more than three-and-twenty—but he had lived with Tamenund's people from childhood. None

knew whence he came. If he himself knew, he kept his own counsel. Tall and straight as the sycamore, lithe as the willow and strong as the oak, he was a companion—a brother—of whose prowess the young men boasted and in whom the elders of the tribe had confidence. His attire was composed of dressed deer-skin and on his well-shaped head, with its black hair. reposed a cap of raccoon. He was not handsome as men are judged nowadays, but his clear eyes shining with honesty, and his picturesque personality, were such as to distinguish him in marked degree from the few other white youths with whom he had come in contact. His real name was Natty Bumppo, but his sureness of eye and his deadly aim had quickly won from his Delaware brothers the sobriquet of Killer-of-the-Deer, or Deerslayer, while in the settlements he was known as Leatherstocking. Since he was clad in hides from head to foot, this name was unusually appropriate, and because it had been conferred upon him by men of his own race, he preferred it to all others.

Boon companion of Leatherstocking was Chingachgook, son of Uncas, Chief of the Mohicans. The two were inseparable and the hunting trail was never taken by one without the other soon following. Chingachgook, the

Big Serpent, had never taken the warpath. With Leatherstocking, he shared the distinction of never having turned a weapon against a fellow man, but now he found himself faced with the duty of shedding human blood. He sat in front of his lodge and his fierce eyes looked away to the South, all his native stoicism forced into action to control the fury that raged within him.

"My brother is not at peace," came the voice of Leatherstocking from over his shoulder.

Chingachgook leaped to his feet and turned to face his companion.

"No," answered the Mohican fiercely. "Chingachgook will never more be at peace until he has sought out the skulking fox, Briarthorn! To-day while we sat in council Briarthorn took captive Wah-ta-Wah, the fairest flower of the Delawares, and is even now carrying her off to the Huron camp."

Leatherstocking's eyes reflected all the fury that blazed from those of the Mohican, for he knew of the love Chingachgook and Wah-ta-Wah bore each other.

"Then we have no time to lose, my brother," he cried. "I will help you find Briarthorn! I am charged with a mission by Tamenund, and now it shall be a double mission."

Chingachgook looked the joy he could not speak. The woodcraft of Leatherstocking was famed wherever Delaware camp fires burned, and he rejoiced at the proffered aid of this powerful ally.

"It is good, my brother," he replied. "The Mohican shall track him along the western shore, Leatherstocking on the east. At the big rock on the Otsego, Chingachgook will meet his brother three suns hence."

Leatherstocking pressed the Mohican's hand in answer and without further preparation the two set out upon their journey.

All night long Leatherstocking kept up his steady advance. He knew the renegade Briarthorn would not sleep within striking distance of the Delaware camp, but would push forward in an attempt to put as many miles as possible behind him before sunrise. Somewhere ahead he could picture the gentle Delaware maiden being driven and dragged through the wilderness, and the vision lent speed to his feet.

By daybreak Leatherstocking had come upon a clearing near the bank of the river, and from its farther end rose the blue smoke of a camp fire. Dropping to the ground, he noiselessly circled the clearing to a point directly back of the fire, and there, in a declivity at the edge

of the water, he saw a figure that brought a smile of recognition to his face. Cupping his hands, he shouted:

"Hurry Harry!"

The man on the beach turned and looked about him in surprise. His gigantic figure stiffened under its buckskin garb and his handsome face took on a puzzled look. Just then Leatherstocking emerged from his hiding place and stood revealed.

" 'Tis Leatherstocking!" exclaimed the giant, striding forward with outstretched hands. "Welcome, my boy; you're just in time for breakfast."

Hurry Harry March, hunter, trapper, trader and wanderer in the forest places, was to most men a mystery, and this fact gratified a pride that was by no means the least of his characteristics. He was handsome—that he knew on the testimony of every pool into which he looked; he was strong as the bear, and his height—he was over six feet four—had made him known to the Indians throughout the region as Tall Pine. But to Leatherstocking, who now came forward to greet him, he was merely Hurry Harry, an old companion who had for months carried on his pursuits elsewhere than in the land of the Delawares.

"Hurry, it's been many moons since you and I met," exclaimed Leatherstocking, clasping the other's hand in both his own.

"Aye, that's the truth," replied Hurry, "and I cannot say that you have bettered yourself. You still take strong to the redskin way of talk. But what brings you so far from the lodge?"

"I'm to meet Chingachgook two suns hence by the big rock on Glimmerglass,—Otsego, as the Delawares call it."

"Glimmerglass," repeated Hurry. " 'Tis strange, but that's the spot I'm bound for. Come, lad, breakfast is waiting."

When two hungry men fall to there is little time for talk, and so it was with Hurry Harry and Leatherstocking. Before another word was spoken all vestiges of food had disappeared. Then Leatherstocking asked:

"Is it a hunting trip that takes you to Glimmerglass?"

A loud, ringing laugh greeted the question.

"Well—you might call it that, and you mightn't. 'Tis a gal—my fr'end—a gal that is takin' me back to Glimmerglass. P'r'aps you've heard of Judith Hutter. If not, you soon will, for never a white man goes near the lake that she don't see or that don't see her."

"I've heard the Delawares tell of a white woman thereabouts," replied Leatherstocking. "She lives on a boat, they say."

"That's the one," nodded Hurry, "only 'tisn't a boat exactly. You see, her father, Floatin' Tom Hutter, has lived on Glimmerglass these fifteen years. Once, when Judith and her sister, Hetty, were children, the Injins tried to drive Tom away. They burned his cabin, but he and his darters escaped. Then Tom built his house out in the lake, where the Injins could not come nigh without his seein' 'em, and he built another house, too—a floatin' house that he uses for his purposes about the lake and the outlet."

"You speak of another girl, Hetty—are there two birds in Hutter's nest?"

"Yes, lad, Hetty is the younger. A comely gal she is, too, but not quite as strong in the head as might be. Just on the varge of ignorance, I call her—a bit touched in the mind."

"Them are beings the Lord has under his special care," said Leatherstocking, solemnly.

"That's as may be. Hows'ever, old Tom has her under his special care, and so has Judith, and what with that and his trying to keep claim to the lake, he has little peace, I'll be bound."

"Oh, then, does he own Glimmerglass?"

"Well, he says he does, and that's enough for such as Floatin' Tom Hutter. They say, lad, that he once was a free liver and sailed the salt water along with a certain Captain Kidd, who was hanged for piracy. That's why he's here. The King's cruisers can't cross yonder mountains so Tom feels safe to enjoy his plunder peaceably."

"Then he's wrong, Hurry, very wrong. A man can enjoy plunder peaceably nowhere."

"So Tom is l'arnin'," replied March, with a smile, "but p'r'aps not for the reason you mean. You see, lad, Judith is a wayward and headstrong gal. She's a beauty and she knows it, and I fear she hasn't always been as maidenly and modest as she should ha' been. There's a young English captain from one of the forts over on the Mohawk that I look on with some suspicion, and I'll vow Jude has no one to blame but her own folly, if I'm right. But, try as may, I can't get her out of my mind, and that's why you find me now on my way back to Glimmerglass—to marry her if she'll say the word."

Leatherstocking looked at his companion in mild surprise, but said nothing.

"Come, we've squandered time enough," said March, starting to his feet.

Leatherstocking followed his example and the two made off into the forest. The sun had just started on its afternoon journey down the western sky when they broke through the underbrush and came out upon a shingle of sandy beach that led by a gentle slope down to the river which at this point was wide as a lake and smooth as a woodland pool.

"If I mistake not, 'tis hereabouts we hid the canoe six months back," said March, looking about him.

But Leatherstocking had already wormed his way through the thick bush to the trunk of a huge basswood tree that had long since ended its struggles with the elements and fallen to the earth. Decay had attacked its center and hollowed it out as though some gnawing animal had tunneled it from end to end. Leatherstocking removed some pieces of bark that cleverly concealed the opening at the base of the trunk, and a moment later, with his companion's assistance, drew from the cavity thus disclosed a bark canoe containing its seats, paddles, and other appliances, even to fishing lines and rods. The real task came with the efforts of the two to force the craft through the underbrush to the river, but by diligent use of hunting knives they at last cleared a path.

"Now 'tis but a short pull and the waters of Glimmerglass will be beneath us," exclaimed March. "Swing your paddle, lad, and we'll be off to the glorious Judith"

## CHAPTER II

### MUSKRAT CASTLE

On a rising bit of thickly wooded land on the western side of Glimmerglass, a band of roving Hurons, the advance guard of Montcalm's red allies, made their camp late that afternoon. Rivenoak, fiercest and most feared of all the Huron chiefs, had long turned his greedy eyes on that bit of water and the rich hunting grounds that surrounded it.

His tribe's alliance with the French had given him the excuse he wanted, and, not waiting for instructions from his white commander, he had struck southward to take by force what Floatin' Tom claimed as a freehold. Hutter, "the Muskrat," for so the Indians had named him, would contribute a scalp to some Huron belt. Judith, "the Wildflower," would grace some Huron lodge. Hetty, touched by the Great Manitou, was a sacred being and therefore could not be disposed of even by a chief.

Thus planned Rivenoak as he gazed moodily over the shimmering waters that stretched

out beneath him, and the commotion that suddenly rose beyond the hastily erected lodges broke irritatingly upon his train of thought.

Two of his warriors were leading towards him a Delaware brave and with him a Delaware maid whose fairness was heightened by the anger that flashed from her fine eyes. The brave stopped before the Huron chief and straightened his lithe body as he boldly faced the warriors that crowded around.

"Briarthorn greets the great Rivenoak," he said, turning to the chief. "I come from the South seeking my Huron brothers and the place of a warrior in their tribe."

Rivenoak maintained an ominous silence as his fierce eyes took in every detail of Briarthorn's garb and appearance. The assembled Huron warriors pressed about the Delaware girl in open admiration, an action which found small favor with the squaws, judging from the malignant glances turned upon her from the feminine contingent. Briarthorn's assumed ease began to dwindle and his forced boldness became more forced as Rivenoak continued to scrutinize him coldly.

"The Delaware seeks brotherhood with the Huron," the chief said scornfully as though speaking the thought aloud. "The jackal

would take the name of the mountain lion and, with it, the bravery of the mountain lion."

"Briarthorn is no Delaware," lied the newcomer, "but as true a Huron as any here."

"The Huron does not wear the Delaware headdress," countered Rivenoak, pointing to the hawk feather hanging over Briarthorn's ear. Then a crafty light came into his eyes—one more warrior to add to his band would not be amiss—and as he came a step nearer he asked:

"What has Briarthorn to offer my people in return for a warrior's lodge?"

In answer Briarthorn turned and, roughly clasping the Delaware girl's wrist, drew her before the chief.

"I bring the fairest flower of the Delawares to bloom among the Huron women," he replied triumphantly. "Wah-ta-Wah!"

The Delaware girl drew her arm in loathing from Briarthorn's hand and turned on him in fury.

"The Hurons are dogs—cowards," she cried. "They are vile. Briarthorn does well to deny Delaware ancestry. The Delawares would be defiled by him!"

Rivenoak listened for a moment and then, with a majestic wave of the hand, indicated his

wish that Wah-ta-Wah be removed from his sight. But peace was not to be restored by means of any such expedient. A Huron scout dashed into the circle with the news that two white men in a canoe had just entered Glimmerglass and were even then making towards Muskrat Castle. A dozen warriors pressed about him, but Rivenoak forced his way among them.

"When the Muskrat summons his forces," he said, "it is time for the Hurons to strike."

Then turning to Briarthorn, he went on:

"Hearken, Delaware or Huron, whichever you be—prove now your right to a warrior's place among my people. Go with my young men and bring back the scalps of the Muskrat and the two who seek to aid him!"

The Delaware straightened and clasped his rifle and tomahawk more firmly.

"Briarthorn is ready," he said.

Rivenoak smiled a trifle scornfully, then singled out seven stalwart warriors from those who were expectantly awaiting orders. Addressing them, he said:

"The Delawares are treacherous. They love not the Hurons, for they are brothers to the Yengeese. He who calls himself Briarthorn wears the Delaware headdress, yet he wishes

to be a Huron warrior. Keep him at the front of the attack and have your weapons ready to slay him if he show sign of untrustworthiness. Rivenoak has spoken."

Briarthorn would have protested against this doubt of his motives, but there was not time. Two of the Hurons grasped his arms and he found himself being hurried away towards the lake, in the somewhat anomalous position of a leader who is being driven forward by his own men.

Shading his eyes with his hand, Rivenoak peered out across the expanse of water, and there, close inshore, he could make out the canoe of the two white men. As he watched, it swung away from its course and its prow was turned towards the odd structure that stood in shoal water near the head of the lake.

The afternoon was already well spent when Leatherstocking and his companion drove their canoe with strong paddle thrusts into the waters of Glimmerglass. The sun had dropped below the crest of the western hills and a soft glow spread over the scene.

"Yonder is Floatin' Tom's house," spoke up March, "Muskrat Castle."

Leatherstocking turned and looked in the

direction indicated. The structure had just come into his line of vision as the canoe rounded a wooded point and its strangeness elicited from him an exclamation of astonishment.

Muskrat Castle, as the house had been named by some waggish officer, stood in the open lake fully a quarter of a mile from the nearest shore. On every other side the distance was much greater, two miles of water separating it from the northern end of the sheet and nearly a mile from the eastern bank. The house stood on piles driven deep into the shoal that cut across the lake at that point, and the water flowed beneath it.

As the prow of the canoe scraped against the piling, another outburst of astonishment came from Leatherstocking's lips. Muskrat Castle was not merely a woodsman's cabin out of its element, but had all the appearance of a permanent establishment. A "door-yard" extended twelve or fifteen feet in front of the house proper, some three feet above the surface of the water. Like the rest of the structure, this was fashioned of pine logs squared on the top side and earth had been packed between them. The house itself was reared above this platform, and Leatherstocking could see at a glance that it was marvelously equipped to

withstand assault, particularly since the assailants must expose themselves on the open lake to the sweeping fire of the protected defenders.

March grasped a pile and drew the canoe close alongside.

"Halloo, Tom Hutter!" he called, and awaited a reply.

Again he called out, but the gentle lapping of the water around the piles was the only sound that broke the silence.

" 'Tis as I thought likely," said March, "the old fellow is driftin' around the other end this fine weather and has left the Castle to defend itself. Well, lad, now we know that he is not up thisaway, 'twill be but a small matter to paddle down and hunt him up in his hidin' place."

So saying, Hurry Harry shoved the nose of the canoe away from the piling and headed it towards the lower end of the lake. Under the steady, skillful strokes of the paddlers, the little craft leaped through the water and after half an hour it drew inshore towards the mouth of a narrow stream, the outlet of Glimmerglass. March headed directly into the current, using his paddle as a rudder with which to follow the turnings of the stream. The thick underbrush growing down to the water's edge, to-

gether with the deepening dusk, rendered vision well-nigh impossible and suddenly the canoe brought up with a jolt against an outcropping of bush that seemed to extend far out into the current.

"We're aground, lad," cried March. "Back water!"

No sooner had his voice sounded than the bush parted and a singularly beautiful girlish face was thrust through an opening in the leaves within reach of Leatherstocking's paddle. Its owner smiled graciously upon the young man; and the frown that she cast on March, though simulated and pettish, had the effect of rendering her beauty more striking by exhibiting the play of an expressive but capricious countenance.

The nature of the surprise was soon explained. By merest accident the men had dropped alongside the ark which had been concealed in bushes cut and arranged for the purpose; and Judith Hutter had pushed aside the leaves that lay before a window in order to show her face and speak to them. It was but the work of a moment for Leatherstocking and March to make their canoe fast to the ark and clamber aboard through the bushes.

Hutter's floating house was what the term implied—a clumsy scow with a cabin in its center. The whole was propelled by sweeps from the bow. An experienced navigator would have found difficulty in making headway with such an unwieldy contrivance, but Floatin' Tom and his girls, familiar with all the quirks and cranks of the craft, handled it with ease.

As the newcomers, led by Judith, entered the cabin, Hutter himself looked up from his task of mending a crude trap and gave them a welcome in which he unsuccessfully sought to bury sincerity under surliness.

"I looked for you a week ago," he said to March, "and was disappointed uncommonly when you didn't come. A runner brought word of more trouble between the Canadas and the colonies, and I warn't comfortable with three scalps to protect."

"With two such darters as you've got, that's a nat'ral feeling," returned March, with a lingering glance in the haughty Judith's direction. "Well, here I am, and I've brought you another who will help you defend 'em if he's needed."

"Young man, you are welcome," growled Hutter, thrusting a hard bony hand towards the youth.

"Yes," went on March, ignoring this interruption, "I enlist right now as Judith's soldier, and here is Leatherstocking to help you take care of Hetty."

"Many thanks to you, Master March," exclaimed the beauty in a full, rich voice, utterly devoid of the intonation and accent that marked the speech of the whites in the settlements, "many thanks to you; but Judith Hutter has the spirit and the experience that will make her depend more upon herself than on good-looking rovers like you."

"Girl, girl," interrupted the father, "quiet that glib tongue and hear the truth. There are savages in the neighborhood as I can testify who have seen signs of their presence."

This information startled Leatherstocking with the fear that he might be too late and that Montcalm had succeeded in stirring up the tribes.

"But are you sure they're real Canadas?" he asked.

" 'Tis their signs I've seen, not them," replied Hutter.

"Well, if this be true, old man, we'd best lose no time in gettin' this ark of yours back to the Castle," exclaimed March.

While this conversation was going on, Leath-

erstocking permitted his gaze to wander towards a corner of the cabin where, on a low stool, sat a rather pale, sweet-faced girl of not more than eighteen. Her clear eyes rested on the group with a childlike wonder and a faint smile hovered about her lips as they talked. Leatherstocking needed no one to tell him that this was Hetty Hutter, and in vain he sought in her gentle face for some similarity to the haughty, arrogant Judith. There was, of course, the natural sisterly resemblance, but Hetty and Judith were as different as winter and summer.

"Well, we had better be startin' if we are to make the Castle before the Injins find us," muttered Tom, starting to his feet, and the others followed him from the cabin.

"Floatin' Tom is full of contrivances," Hurry Harry had said, and Leatherstocking found it to be true. To bring the ark downstream was simple, but to force it up where the river bed was too narrow to permit of using the sweeps was quite another matter. But Tom had overcome the difficulty. Out in the lake far enough from the river mouth to keep clear of the force of the current, a heavy grapnel had been dropped to the bottom, where it held fast. From it a stout line led down

the river, anchored at each turn by huge rocks. Now, when Tom and his companions sought to return to the lake, they pulled on the line and by the strength of their arms forced the awkward craft upstream against the current.

Alone, Tom could hardly have accomplished the journey in less than an hour, but with his two athletic visitors and such help as Judith and Hetty could offer, the ark came around the last bend in less than half that time.

At the mouth of the river, or rather, at the point where the waters of Glimmerglass emptied into it, a great tree dropped its leafy foliage over the stream. Silently thanking the fortune that had brought them thus far without attack from their red enemies, the three men sighed with relief as the ark swung under the overhanging branches, for a few minutes more would see them in the open lake and well on the way to the safety of Muskrat Castle.

Suddenly a scream of terror came from Judith, who stood at the stern, and the ark shook with the impact as eight of Rivenoak's braves hurled themselves upon the deck from the leafy branches above. A piercing Huron war-whoop shattered the silence, seemingly in answer to the girl's cry.

## CHAPTER III

### INTO THE NIGHT

LEATHERSTOCKING, who had been at the prow of the craft about to give a lusty pull on the anchored cable, turned like a flash as Judith's cry of terror blended into the savage shriek of the Indians. His rifle lay at his feet, but before he had time to grasp it, a lithe red body, streaked with paint, hurled itself at him. The wild training of his boyhood days, however, had taught him never to retreat, so, striking aside the upraised tomahawk, he swung his powerful right fist in a lightning-like sweep, landing it with crushing force on the jaw of his assailant. The Indian was thrown to the deck and lay still.

Meantime two of the redskins had combined their attack on Hurry Harry, but a physical encounter was as the breath of life to him, and, swinging his long rifle like a club, he was laying about him so vigorously that the enemy had perforce to keep their distance. Floatin' Tom was struggling on deck with a fourth In-

dian and his long muscular arms seemed well able to protect their owner.

But on none of these did the quick eye of Leatherstocking rest. His one thought was of Judith, and he leaped frantically over his fallen foe as he saw the brave girl interposing her body between her sister and the remaining four redskins who were closing in upon her.

In falling, Floatin' Tom had dropped his rifle and for a second Judith's foot touched it. Instinctively she seemed to know what it was without looking and, with a fierce tigerish movement, she stooped and picked it up. Even as Leatherstocking cleared the last three feet that separated him from the two girls, Judith fired and one of the Indians, clutching a hand to his shoulder, pitched overboard and sank in the water.

"Well done, Judith!" Leatherstocking cried.

This sudden and totally unexpected turn of events had taken the Indians so completely by surprise that for one unfortunate second they hesitated. But that second was enough. Leatherstocking sprang at them like a catamount on its prey. His hands shot forward and each of them closed on a Huron throat. With all the strength at his command, he crashed their heads together and pushed them from the deck.

At the same moment, he was thrown flat on his stomach by the weight of a human body. Wriggling quickly to one side, he slid out from under the last of the four Hurons who had sought to surround the girls. Over the prostrate redskin stood Judith with the heavy rifle poised above her head and Leatherstocking realized that to her bravery he owed his life.

When he had leaped upon the two Hurons, he had not noticed the third crouched catlike on the deck of the ark. This warrior jumped as Leatherstocking cracked the two heads together. With tomahawk upraised, he sprang on the unsuspecting youth and would undoubtedly have added a scalp to his belt but for the quickness of Judith. The girl threw all her power into the blow and brought the rifle butt down with stunning force on the Huron's skull, and his limp body in falling bore his intended victim to the deck. By this time, the rest of the attacking party had been routed by the ark's defenders.

Leatherstocking got to his feet and stood before the girl in silence, a peculiar expression in his eyes. Judith was beautiful. He had seen that at first glance, but now, with the exaltation of battle on her face, she seemed infinitely more beautiful than he had ever imag-

*A Pathé Picture.*

"QUICK!" HE SHOUTED, "KILL THAT DEVIL!"

*Leatherstocking.*

ined a girl could be. He wanted to speak, to tell her how wonderful she was, but his voice refused to do his bidding. Before the almost boyish frankness in her clear eyes, his own faltered and looked away, for he remembered in a flash the light words of Harry March, "There's a young English captain from one of the forts over on the Mohawk that I look on with some suspicion and I'll vow Jude has no one to blame but her own folly, if I'm right."

Somewhere back in his strange youth, Leatherstocking had been taught that honesty, honor and integrity, in women as well as in men, were more to be desired than great riches or great beauty, and he was firmly convinced that in the scales of God these three virtues outweighed all others. He had no reason to question Hurry's appraisal, and therefore, like many another man, he mentally condemned the girl without a fair hearing. He straightened his shoulders and his eyes met hers again.

"I'm obliged to you," he said slowly. "I'll not forget."

Then he turned away to see March regarding him curiously from the other side of the ark. The giant came forward and placed a big hand on Judith's shoulder with an air of possession.

"Well, lad," he said to Leatherstocking, "we

sartainly put a stop to that Huron war party. And little Jude here gave a good account of herself, eh, my girl?"

"Praise from you, Master March, is indeed an honor," replied Judith scornfully, pulling her arm free from his hand. "Small thanks to you for our safety."

"Oh, Judith, that isn't just," interrupted Hetty, gently, speaking for the first time since the Indians dropped to the deck of the ark. "Harry fought off two of them and I'm sure he would have done more if there had been need. "But"—her voice grew lower—"we should not give our thanks to any mortal for our safety. We were in God's hands, as we always are, and He protected us."

The flush of anger that had suffused March's face at Judith's biting words faded and the retort he intended to make died on his lips as he looked at the fragile little creature who had noiselessly stepped beside him. Leatherstocking, too, not entirely free from the red man's belief in Divine protection of those "touched in the mind," as Harry had said, looked at the girl with awe.

"We've no time for talk," came the gruff voice of Tom Hutter calling those in the little group to a realization of their surroundings.

"The red devils were bested this time, but they'll be back. Lend a hand here, Harry, and you, young man."

March and Leatherstocking, thus adjured, hastened to Tom's side, and the interrupted journey from the river mouth to the point where the grapnel was anchored in the lake was resumed, this time with much greater speed than before. On the shore, at some fifty yards from the river, could be seen the remnants of the attacking party of Hurons. Three stood on the beach and three others were swimming towards them supporting two comrades whose injuries prevented their making any efforts to save themselves.

"Guess we didn't kill any of 'em," muttered Floatin' Tom regretfully, as he watched the erstwhile war party start back through the underbrush. "Well, better luck next time."

Dark had fallen when the ark was finally maneuvered alongside Muskrat Castle by means of the sweeps. It had been a tiring journey for all because, although the craft was equipped with a short mast and a rude sail, the twilight calm had rendered useless this means of propulsion and unassisted arm-power had brought it to its destination. The ark was made fast and the little party entered Muskrat Castle

which was soon bright with the glow of half a dozen candles.

All through the supper that Judith and Hetty prepared at the baked clay and rock fireplace, Leatherstocking looked about him with the true woodsman's admiration for the very evident patience and skill the builder of the Castle must have exercised. Three rooms comprised the establishment—the room in which they were seated and two smaller rooms evidently used as sleeping quarters. The walls were of squared pine logs, well calked with clay to make them air- and water-tight. The floor was fashioned similarly, and the roof was made of closely fitted boughs, covered with strips of birch bark and held in one solid mass by liberal applications of clay.

The furnishings were of the simplest kind. A table of pine slabs and legs of straight pine boughs from which the bark had not been removed, and three chairs of similar construction, sufficed to meet the needs of the occupants. To the right of the entrance was the fireplace, a building enterprise upon which Hutter had expended much time and profanity before attaining a perfection of masonry calculated to retain fire and smoke.

"For as cozy a nest as this, lad," March

remarked jokingly, "even you might be induced to give up your wigwam."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Hutter, turning a quizzical eye on the object of this bit of raillery.

"Why, friend Leatherstocking is as much a redskin as a white," explained March. "Even now he's on the way to meet an Injin chief at the big rock down the lake."

Hutter straightened and his voice took on a tone that could not by any stretch of the imagination be termed friendly.

"I don't like that," he growled. "This man is a stranger and he's to meet an Injin here at a time when all Injins are a menace. We've been attacked already. 'Tis my thought that he had best explain himself."

"For shame, father," exclaimed Judith, warmly coming to Leatherstocking's defense. "He was in as much danger as any of us, and he fought quite as well. Why, he saved my life!"

"There's no secret about what I'm doin' here," interrupted Leatherstocking with a faint smile. "The truth is that I've lived all my life with the Delawares, and the Delawares are friends of the white man. The French soldiers are tryin' to make the Delawares fight

with them ag'inst the English. Tamenund won't hear to it and has sent me to visit the tribes west of this lake to warn them not to fight the white men. That's why you find me in these parts."

"But this Injin chief you're to meet," persisted Hutter, still suspicious, "who is he?"

"He is Chingachgook, a Mohican. The part o' my mission that consarns him, consarns him alone. It has no connection with any here and as it's his secret and not mine, I'll say no more about it."

" 'Tis something about a young woman," interrupted Judith, hastily; then, coloring at the impulse that prompted her to impute such a motive, she added, half apologetically, "If it's neither war nor a hunt, it must be love."

"Aye, it comes easy for the young and handsome, who hear so much of them feelin's, to suppose that they lie at the bottom of most proceedin's, but on that head I'll say nothin'. Chingachgook is to meet me at the rock an hour before sunset to-morrow evening, after which we'll go our way together, molestin' none but the King's enemies, who are lawfully our own."

"The explanation is satisfactory," Hutter admitted, with a surly attempt to smooth over

any ill feeling he had caused. "Master Leatherstocking will be accepted here as a friend."

The threatened unpleasantness thus cleared away, Judith again relapsed into silence and a moment later left the room. Hardly had she entered the bedroom when her cry for help brought the three men to their feet. They rushed to the doorway in time to see a Huron warrior leaping towards the open window through which he shot his body like an arrow leaving a bow. A splash outside marked his plunge into the lake, and then came the sound of arms and legs cutting the water in the intruder's hasty efforts to swim out of range.

Leatherstocking ran to the window and peered out. The moon had risen and its silvery radiance disclosed the dark figure in the water swimming steadily towards shore. Hutter, strangely more angry than apprehensive at the astounding fact that a redskin had at last managed to penetrate the fastness of Muskrat Castle, grasped Leatherstocking's arm with convulsive fingers.

"Quick!" he shouted frantically. "Get your rifle and kill that devil!"

"Little good if I did," replied Leatherstocking, "and the chances are ag'inst my hittin'

him. Moonlight is not cal'lated to help marksmanship."

Hutter rushed from the room and, hurriedly picking up a lighted candle from the table on which still stood the fragments of supper, entered his own bedroom and closed and bolted the door behind him. His face distorted with fury, he looked about him and gave voice to the most blasphemous oath his years of life on the seas had taught him. The room was in complete disorder. Not a thing had been overlooked by the prowling Indian. Evidently he had entered Muskrat Castle before the owners returned in the ark and had been trapped in the bedroom by their arrival.

In one corner stood a huge iron-bound chest such as seafaring men fill with the odds and ends gathered on their cruises. This had been fastened with a heavy padlock for which Hutter carried the key, but a few well-directed blows of a tomahawk had broken the staple and the lid stood open. All over the floor the contents of the chest had been scattered as the Huron sought something that appealed to his savage fancy. Papers, ships' instruments, clothing, several smaller boxes and scores of other articles were strewn about in wild disorder.

Feverishly Hutter dropped to his knees and cleared out the rest of the contents until the very bottom of the chest was exposed. This he examined with extreme care, running his fingers over every inch of it. Finally, satisfied with what his examination disclosed, he rose to his feet.

"Safe," he muttered to himself, and his face, a moment before fiendish in its fury, assumed an expression of relief.

Without another glance at the havoc wrought by the intruder, he turned and left the room.

In the main room Leatherstocking and Hurry Harry were excitedly discussing the incident while the sisters sat close together in evident fear now that their supposedly impregnable stronghold had been invaded. Hutter's entrance stopped the discussion, and he looked at the two men with sudden determination.

"Well, one thing is sartain," he observed, "we've a great advantage over the redskins in being afloat. Aside from your canoe and mine, Hurry, there's but three canoes on the lake, and I've got them hid snug in hollow logs."

"Don't be too sure," broke in March; "if it's a war party and they're in real earnest

to smoke you out, old Tom, they'll have your hidden canoes in the lake by to-morrow night, I'll be bound."

Hutter looked worried. His daughters, his home, his traps were in real danger if March had spoken the truth.

"It's my notion, Tom," went on March, "that all your possessions hereaway are like to fall into Huron hands. This Injin swum out to the Castle when we warn't here, but the main body must depend on canoes and we'd best put a stop to that in advance."

"Aye, that may be," muttered Tom, reflectively, "that may be. If the canoes were here, now, safe from the Injins, we'd be in no danger."

Then a grim smile passed over his face.

"Both the English and the French are payin' high for scalps," he said. "If we should get the canoes and a few Injin scalps into the bargain now— What's your sentiments on these p'ints, Hurry?"

"My sentiments are yours, old man," returned Hurry with enthusiasm.

"And you, young man?" Tom continued, addressing Leatherstocking.

"If it's to get the canoes, then I'm with you and Hurry," replied Leatherstocking, "but I

say shame to them that pays bounty on a human's scalp, and I'll have nought to do with that part of it. 'Tis right for us to protect ourselves, but wrong to do needless killin'."

Hutter was plainly disappointed and was about to speak his mind concerning a white man who considered an Indian human, when Judith again came to Leatherstocking's defense.

"Such feelings do him credit, father," she declared, "and you would be wise to profit by his counsel."

"Say no more on the subject, girl," Hutter commanded, rising. "The young man can at least go ashore with us and bring the canoes back here to the Castle. Then he can remain here as guard for you and Hetty."

To this Leatherstocking agreed, and a few minutes later Harry's canoe containing the three men slipped silently away into the darkness towards the shore.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE TEST OF BRIARTHORN

At the head of his marauding Hurons, the crafty Rivenoak had penetrated far into enemy country in his advance southward. Glimmerglass, some miles below the line of English wilderness forts that dotted the Mohawk from Hudson's River westward, lay beyond the northern boundaries of the territory occupied by the Delaware nation, and served as a natural center from which access to the numerous tribes in the west was comparatively simple.

In this wilderness, with its scattering of white settlers, it had been no difficult task for Montcalm's agents to make their way unnoticed past the British outposts and reach the very heart of Delaware territory. Such a course, too, was as easy of accomplishment to Rivenoak if he had chosen to make open warfare on Tamenund's people. This may have been the desire of the French, but nothing was farther from the mind of the Huron chief. His part of the campaign, he had determined, should consist solely in harrying the white set-

tlers, with an occasional raid on some weaker tribe thrown in by way of diversion, but principally in possessing for himself and his people the rich hunting grounds that surrounded Glimmerglass.

Consequently, at the first intimation of a renewal of hostilities, in fact, before any actual orders to advance had come from Montcalm, he led his warriors south with all possible speed. The homeland of his people lay to the northwest, and he had taken every advantage of this fact in approaching his objective. Cautiously he had circled the western end of British forts and, without interference of any kind, he finally reached the point which he knew from many hunting trips to command the entire expanse of water. This was a wooded hill that rose abruptly from the western shore of Glimmerglass, and, in a clearing that surmounted this, his people had begun the construction of a temporary village.

The patience of the Indian is proverbial. On the warpath or the hunting trail he is tireless, drawing his strength from a seemingly inexhaustible source of nervous energy, but when it best suits his purpose he can at will become the stolid, unemotional, immovable red statue that he is so frequently pictured.

Rivenoak possessed all these characteristics. He seemed the very spirit of fanatical hate when he sent his war party to crush three white men, but now he sat silent and rigid in his lodge awaiting the return of his braves with, as he fondly hoped, the scalps of his enemies. That the Muskrat was his enemy, Rivenoak knew full well. The Muskrat was the sworn enemy of every redskin that ventured near the waters or the shores of Glimmerglass.

In the Castle this white usurper and his daughters were safe, for access to the dwelling was possible only by canoe and Rivenoak's people, now on the war path by reason of Montcalm's promises of loot and scalps, had of necessity not burdened themselves with the cumbersome craft.

When his warriors had set out on learning of the presence of two strange white men on the lake, Rivenoak had little hope that they would actually make contact with the enemy. All day he had watched Muskrat Castle and he knew that Hutter and his daughters were not at home. But, with all the wily intuition of his race, he reasoned that the strange white men must know and be known to Hutter. If this were true, they would in all likelihood know where to find him when they discovered his

absence from the Castle. Therefore, if the Huron warriors followed on shore the lead taken by the strangers' canoe, they would ultimately be led to Hutter's hiding place.

How well this line of reasoning worked out, we already know, but Rivenoak in his lodge stoically awaited the return of the war party, unaware of the defeat it had met at the hands of the hated whites. An hour he waited and dusk came on, and with it came a commotion from without that caused the Huron chief to peer through the curtain of branches that served as a door. Straggling through the underbrush and into the clearing, hailed loudly by the women, came the warriors who had set out a short time before to bring in the scalps of the white men. They came not as victors, they brought no prisoners, and, as they finally halted before the camp fire, Rivenoak could see that their belts held no white scalps. He stalked out and glowered at them.

"My warriors return in silence," he said slowly and with undisguised sarcasm. "They pass through the forest like the serpent slides through the grass."

"Rivenoak speaks truly," replied Briarthorn. "The Yengees fled in the big canoe with white wings. The Hurons could not follow."

The circle of Indians that pressed around the inglorious warriors separated and Wah-ta-Wah stood boldly before the Huron chief. With the utmost contempt she regarded Briarthorn, and then her scornful laugh rang out.

"Briarthorn is a brave warrior," she cried mockingly. "He runs from the Delawares to ask shelter of the Hurons and he runs from the Yengees to lie to Rivenoak! The Yengees did not flee! See the Huron warriors bear wounds!"

And boldly forcing the furious Briarthorn to one side, the Delaware girl pulled from the crowd into the light of the camp fire the warrior whose shoulder had received the shot from Judith's rifle.

"See!" she cried, pointing to the injury. "See how the Yengees fled before the brave Hurons!"

Again she laughed contemptuously as she favored Briarthorn with an impudent toss of her head.

Rivenoak, at first angered at Wah-ta-Wah's behavior, looked in interest at the evidence of actual defeat she had singled out. Then he faced Briarthorn with an evil gleam in his eyes.

"The Delaware woman makes much talk, but she speaks truth," he said fiercely. "The Del-

aware who would be a Huron has led the Huron warriors as the jackal who would lead the mountain lion."

"Rivenoak is a fair and just chief," exclaimed Briarthorn hastily, not a little alarmed at the looks of suspicion directed against him from the circle of Huron faces. "Let a Huron tell the tale of a Huron defeat. Briarthorn will keep silence."

For a moment Rivenoak considered this proposal and then agreed. Summoning a young warrior who had been a member of the war party, the Chief bade him tell what had happened. The Huron told of circling the head of the lake and keeping pace with the Yengees' canoe as it left the Castle and skirted the shore. He explained how he and his companions had watched it traverse the river and finally bring up at the concealed ark; how it had been decided to attack the ark from the overhanging tree at the entrance to the lake, and how this attack had been met by the Muskrat and his people.

"The Yengees are mighty warriors," he concluded frankly. "Even the women are powerful in battle. The Delaware himself fell under the blow of a woman's rifle butt."

Briarthorn winced at this statement, for a

throbbing pain in his head, centering about an area to the left of his scalp lock, testified to its truth. It was he who had tried to strike down Leatherstocking from the rear and who had been knocked unconscious by Judith. The young Huron's recital of this incident again aroused the fear that Leatherstocking had recognized his erstwhile Delaware brother and would at once suspect the whereabouts of Wahta-Wah. Knowing the strong friendship that existed between Leatherstocking and Chingachgook, Briarthorn rightly surmised that his abduction of the Delaware girl had something to do with the young white man's presence in those parts and that the Mohican himself was not far away. But Briarthorn's danger lay much nearer than that. In the rush of the fight Leatherstocking had not recognized him, but the Hurons were beginning to realize that he was not to be trusted. This was in truth an evil beginning for one who sought place as a Huron warrior.

Impassive and silent, but grimly attentive, Rivenoak listened to the young Huron's story. He was, as Briarthorn had said, a fair and just chief, and although displeased at the failure of his warriors in their encounter with the Yengees, the story he had heard seemed plaus-

ible. At least, he had lost none of his men, and opportunity would surely present itself for another attack in such numbers that Hutter and his people would be easily overpowered. Canoes were lacking, that was true, but rafts would do as well, and with this idea in mind, he turned away from the group of warriors. Two such rafts had already been completed that afternoon and Rivenoak was content.

While this scene was being enacted in the camp, down on the beach, a quarter of a mile away, one of Rivenoak's most trusted warriors, the Lynx, dragged himself from the water and dropped exhausted on the ground. For several minutes he lay still, and then, raising himself to a sitting posture, he looked back across the dark expanse of lake from which a wraith-like mist was rising. There was an exultant gleam in his eyes and he bared his teeth in a wolfish snarl as he discerned through the hazy night air the faint lights in Muskrat Castle.

"Yengee thieves!" he muttered, quite overlooking the fact that but for his own thieving proclivities he would have been spared the long and tiring swim to the Castle and back.

But the Lynx was not logical. An angry man never is.

His great strength now restored by the brief

rest, he leaped to his feet and, with the water dripping from his feathers and tribal accouterments, he set out at a trot for the Huron camp.

When the Lynx entered the circle of firelight, he saw Rivenoak and Briarthorn apparently in council with the assembled warriors. Disregarding the formalities of the occasion, he crowded into the circle and stood before the Chief. His sudden appearance put a stop to the discussion that was in progress, and he excitedly began to recount his adventures.

The Lynx had followed the war party to the headland from which only a scant quarter mile of water separated the Castle from the shore. There he had plunged in and, with long, easy strokes, had swam to the piling. There he pulled himself up to the "door yard" and, finding the door unlocked, he entered. He told of the loot Hutter's sea chest contained, none of which he could bring back for fear of ruining it in the water. So intent upon his search had he become that by the time he reached the room of the sisters, the ark had tied up outside, and he was trapped. Then came Judith's discovery and his escape through the window.

The story pleased Rivenoak immensely, for it confirmed his belief that the Castle contained loot worthy of his efforts. He leaped to his

feet and a moment later all his warriors were gathered about him. The attack on the Castle should be made that night—at once. At the same time, a party would be left on shore to guard against a possible attack from the Yengees in their canoes.

As though in response to a prearranged signal, the warriors separated in two parties, one to man the rafts and the other to wait on shore. Then, as silently as shadows, they vanished in the underbrush.

## CHAPTER V

### PRISONERS OF WAR

It was not far from ten o'clock when the canoe containing Leatherstocking, Hutter and Hurry Harry March pushed off from the staging in front of Muskrat Castle. The moon, which earlier in the evening had cast a brilliant light over Glimmerglass, had drawn behind thick clouds and from the surface of the water a mist was rising that made the shore seem vague and distant. Hutter and March plied their paddles with extreme caution in order that their approach might not be heard by some sharp-eared Huron scout. Leatherstocking, crouched in the prow with his rifle over his knees, kept his keen eyes straight ahead, peering into the mist that was momentarily becoming thicker.

"Sheer off a p'int to port," mumbled Hutter over his shoulder to March; "them canoes is all together about a mile south of the headland."

In answer to the skillful paddle strokes, the light bark craft bore southward and for half an hour not a word was spoken. The canoe

forged ahead over the dark, smooth water, cleaving the mist which closed behind it like a curtain. Then Hutter strove to pierce the mist with his eyes.

"Hereabouts, I cal'late," he said in a low tone, and three powerful paddle strokes sent the canoe grating and scraping up on a sandy beach.

"Now, where, old man?" asked March, following Leatherstocking as the latter stepped ashore.

Hutter joined them and looked about him in the darkness. As his eyes fell on the outline of a tall pine some five or six feet distant, a triumphant chuckle escaped him.

"Couldn't a done better," he exclaimed. "Right at the foot of that pine one of 'em is hid and the others is near by."

He ran forward and, in verification of his statement, came upon a fallen basswood giant. In a moment he had removed a screen of bark and leaves and, with the aid of March, pulled a canoe from the rot-hollowed trunk. Leatherstocking, fully aware of the need for haste, picked up the canoe and ran with it to the beach, where he made it fast to the stern of his own. By that time Hutter and March had uncovered two more canoes in what, by clever conceal-

ment, appeared to be impenetrable underbrush. These were carried to the shore and made fast to the first. Then Leatherstocking took his place in the leading canoe which Hutter shoved off and March guided the launching of the three trailers. A few paddle strokes took Leatherstocking a safe distance from shore where he was to await the return of his companions who would not be dissuaded from their plan to take a few Huron scalps in reprisal for the attack of that afternoon. The call of the loon was the signal agreed upon to summon him back to shore to pick up Hutter and March. There on the smooth waters of Glimmerglass, surrounded by the ghostly mist, Leatherstocking began his lonely vigil.

The canoe safely launched, Floatin' Tom and Hurry Harry lost no time in setting out for the spot where they supposed the Huron camp to be. But they had not gone twenty paces inland before they were borne to the ground under the weight of a score of savages who apparently had lain in wait for them. To struggle was futile, for they were outnumbered ten to one, and within a few seconds they were pulled to their feet, their arms securely bound with buckskin thongs that cut into their flesh with every move.

Strangely enough, not a word was spoken by the Hurons. They forced their prisoners along at a rapid pace through the forest and in ten minutes they had reached the camp. The Indians then bound them fast to two saplings that stood within range of the firelight, and a crowd of curious Indian women pressed around them.

Rivenoak, who had not accompanied either of his war parties, crossed the cleared space and walked up to his captives with the air of a conqueror.

"The Muskrat and Tall Pine welcome at Huron camp fire," he said ironically. "Rivenoak glad to greet them. Now it be long before he let them go."

"Keep your talk to yourself, Mingo," snarled March, using the expression of contempt. "You're not done with us yet."

"Tall Pine speak truth," replied Rivenoak, seriously. "Before Hurons done, two more white scalps hang in wigwam."

Then he stepped aside and returned to his lodge, leaving his helpless prisoners to face the jibes, insults and blows of the women and old men.

Despite his first failure in the guise of a Huron warrior, Briarthorn, by his ready wit and glib tongue, had so ingratiated himself in the opinion of Rivenoak that he was placed in charge of the two rafts that were even then making their slow and cumbersome way across Glimmerglass towards Muskrat Castle. In a canoe an Indian is as much at home as he is when his moccasins tread the warpath or the hunting trail, but on the rudely built rafts—logs bound together with buckskin thongs and propelled by means of boughs used as sweeps—he was greatly at a disadvantage. The best efforts of the most skillful warriors were able to produce a speed not much in excess of a crawl, and even then the clumsy craft were constantly getting off their course. The result of this was that more than an hour elapsed between the time the rafts first put out from shore below the Huron camp and the final approach to the Castle.

Within Muskrat Castle Judith and Hetty awaited the return of their father and his companions. Judith was obviously nervous and ill at ease, but Hetty displayed all the calmness of one about whom deadly peril was not at that moment gathering.

"The stranger they call Leatherstocking is

a man who trusts in God," she said, as though the thought forced itself into expression.

"Why, child, how do you know that?" asked Judith in surprise.

"I read it in his eyes," answered Hetty, simply. "Those who believe in God and trust in Him need offer no proof. The honesty and frankness in their eyes tell more than words. Judith, he is a brave man—much braver than Hurry Harry, who forever talks of his bravery —for Leatherstocking says little about himself."

"Hurry Harry March is an irresponsible, undependable forest rover," declared Judith with conviction. "I quite agree with you, Hetty, he suffers much in comparison with Leatherstocking. Oh, I wish father would hurry back. This is the first time I have really experienced fear."

She rose impatiently and went to a window. Taking down the bar, she threw back the heavy shutter and looked out. It was after midnight and a faint breeze had swept the mist from the surface of the lake. Overhead the clouds had broken and the moon, now low in the sky, again bathed Glimmerglass in silvery light. But the beauty of the scene was entirely lost on the girl. Not twenty feet from the open window

she saw something that left her face bloodless and almost paralyzed her with fear.

Two large rafts, each crowded with savages, were being propelled towards the landing stage!

"God help us, little sister," she gasped. "The Hurons have reached the Castle!"

Not for a second did the look of serenity leave Hetty's face. She rose from her chair and clasped her sister's hands.

"God will help us, Judith," she said firmly.

Judith forced her back against the wall, and an air of determination suddenly took possession of her. She ran to the fireplace and from a rack above it took down a long rifle and with it a powder horn and pouch of bullets. With trained fingers she loaded the piece and then she threw open the door and rushed out onto the staging.

From the open door Hetty in amazement watched her sister. All fear now seemed to have left Judith. There on the staging she stood facing the two raft loads of ferocious Huron warriors who had by this time made fast to the piles. A fearsomely painted savage leaped to the staging and stood for a moment leering at the girl. Judith raised the rifle like a flash and fired. The warrior, with a scream, toppled backwards into the water.

Now the staging seemed literally swarming with savages. Infuriated at the death of one of their number, they threw all caution to the winds and, with blood-chilling cries, they leaped from the rafts and bore down on the girl.

Judith ran back to the door and just cleared the threshold when the leader, none other than the renegade Briarthorn, hurled himself forward in a wild attempt to hold the door, but Judith had acted in time. She slammed the heavy door on Briarthorn's fingers and bolted it securely, while the baffled Delaware gave vent to his feelings in a yell that resounded far above the cries of the warriors who now rushed forward.

Far down the lake where he waited for Hutter and March, Leatherstocking heard the shot and the savage cries. He turned in alarm and looked away in the direction of Muskrat Castle of which he could now see the vague outline in the moonlight through the thinning fog. That the Castle had been attacked in some unaccountable way and that the girls were consequently in the gravest danger, he was certain. He could not go to their assistance because he had promised to wait there for Hutter and March. To go would be to leave them to the mercy of the Hurons; to stay meant that

Judith and Hetty would be left to a fate he did not care to think of.

Seemingly as the solution of the problem that confronted him, there came from the deep shadows on shore the clear, shrill cry of the loon. The signal! Hutter and March had returned!

Leatherstocking waited not another second. With powerful paddle strokes he sent his canoe towards the shore, the three others trailing along behind. As the prow touched the beach he leaped out and pulled it up on the sand; then he looked about him. There was no sign of his two friends, but perhaps they were remaining out of sight for a purpose. Cautiously, he started forward, his rifle ready for instant use. He crept through the fringe of underbrush that lined the beach and as he rose to his feet to look about him again, a body hurled itself at him from the shadow and as it bore him down, he saw it was that of a Huron warrior.

Dropping his rifle, Leatherstocking closed powerful hands about the Huron's throat and with a strangling pressure completely shut off the other's wind. The Indian's body grew limp and Leatherstocking hurled it from him. He struggled to his feet, recovered his rifle and

stood waiting for the Huron's next move. The first sign of returning consciousness was a groan, and then the Indian dragged himself to his knees to face Leatherstocking's rifle.

"Get up, Injin," commanded Leatherstocking. "You're still alive."

"No take scalp?" asked the Huron unbelievingly.

"Takin' scalps is an Injin trick," replied Leatherstocking. "White men don't want any scalp but their own."

"White man mighty warrior," said the Indian, relief in his crafty eyes. "Lynx no forget. Lynx tell white man Muskrat and Tall Pine prisoners in Huron camp. Maybe Lynx help to escape, eh?"

"Muskrat and Tall Pine," repeated Leatherstocking, curiously; then he remembered that these were the Indian names for Hutter and March.

"Are you tellin' the truth, Injin?" he demanded fiercely.

"Lynx not lie to mighty warrior," the Huron declared. "Rivenoak capture Muskrat and Tall Pine. Now tie to stake. Lynx go free, Lynx help them, eh?"

"All right," agreed Leatherstocking, lower-

ing his rifle. "You do what you can, but do it quick!"

The Lynx leaped to his feet and came forward, one hand outstretched white man fashion. Leatherstocking took it in a friendly grip, and the Indian ran off across the clearing into which the first gray light of dawn was struggling against the retreating forces of night. Leatherstocking, now determined to go to Muskrat Castle without further loss of time, started back towards the beach when a sudden click from across the clearing caused him to stop. He knew it was the click of a rifle and he was certain that rifle was in the hands of the Lynx. Instantly he aimed his own weapon towards the spot where he had last seen the Huron, and fired just as a flash from the bushes told him that his enemy had fired at the same moment. The Indian's shot went wild, but Leatherstocking's found its mark as the howl of pain from the underbrush evidenced.

Waiting for no further developments, Leatherstocking forced his way through the bushes, crossed the strip of beach at a bound and shoved his canoe into the water. He leaped in and soon was speeding northward towards beleaguered Muskrat Castle, the three canoes trailing along behind him.

## CHAPTER VI

### A MAID-AT-ARMS

When Judith Hutter frantically slammed and bolted the door in the faces of the savage horde, the despair in her heart told her that her victory was but temporary. For two girls, unaided, to hold Muskrat Castle against a bloodthirsty war party of Hurons, seemed an impossible task. Even now the stout slabs of which the door was built were creaking under the blows of half a dozen tomahawks, and the awful cries of the red warriors increased in volume as the weather-beaten wood gave under the onslaught.

Quickly rousing herself from the daze terror had thrown about her faculties, Judith reached for the powder horn and pulled out the plug that closed its pointed end. She dropped the rifle butt on the floor and tilted the horn into the muzzle. A few black grains trickled out and then— The horn was empty! Judith had used the last of the precious contents for her first shot at the enemy.

White-lipped she turned to her sister, the

rifle clattering to the floor from her nerveless fingers.

"This is the end, Hetty," she whispered. "There is no more powder!"

The younger girl looked at her sister uncomprehendingly and then a faint smile came over her face.

"Wait!" she cried.

Hetty ran across the room and entered her father's sleeping quarters.

With a crash the outer door was split from top to bottom and bulged inward under the terrific assault from without. Judith reached for the rifle and, suddenly realizing that it was powerless to aid her, she clasped her hands in an agony of despair.

"Judith, see!" came the voice of Hetty. "Father had them hidden!"

Judith whirled about and saw her sister holding out to her a freshly opened keg of powder and a silver-mounted pistol.

Now the Castle shook with the blows on the shattered door, and with a crash the wood gave way, crumpling inward. Through the opening a savage leaped, followed by three of his comrades. They crouched, tomahawks ready to swing, and advanced stealthily towards the two girls.

The end was now only a matter of seconds. Judith felt it and yet hers was not the spirit to meet death without one supreme effort.

Sweeping Hetty behind her, she grasped the open powder keg under her arm and, turning towards the Indians, she calmly inserted the muzzle of the pistol into the mass of black grains. The Indians realized instantly the meaning of the action, but Judith did not depend on pantomime.

"One step and I fire into the powder," she said, with deadly determination.

The Hurons drew back.

"White girl not fool," called a warrior from the doorway. "Fire in powder, kill self—kill all."

Judith laughed in desperation.

"White girl prefers death to becoming Mingo prisoner," she declared. "Go back to your rafts or I'll fire!"

She took a step forward and forced the pistol muzzle deeper into the powder.

Whether or not they understood her words, the Hurons labored under no delusions as to her intention. The warriors that had entered backed hurriedly to the shattered door, where they stood looking about them in evident fear. Relentlessly the girl came on with the death-

dealing powder keg and pistol held before her.

For a moment the Hurons hesitated, then with wild cries they turned and fled, falling over each other in their attempts to gain the safety of the rafts. Judith paid no attention to their haste. She knew she had won. With measured step she passed through the doorway and out onto the staging which was now bathed in the first rays of the morning sun.

The rafts with their savage crews were being poled speedily away from the staging in the direction of the shore. Judith watched until they were beached at the headland and then she turned wearily back to the Castle. Now that the danger was over, her splendid nerve broke and she threw herself down in a chair as her body shook with sobs.

"Judith, dear," pleaded Hetty, placing her arms about her sister's shoulders, "please calm yourself, please do. We have nothing to fear now. We placed ourselves in God's hands and He showed us the way to turn back our enemies."

"Never a word of praise for Hetty, who found the means of our deliverance?" Judith asked, smiling through her tears. "Without you, little sister, we should indeed have been lost. But, come, it is folly to think more about

it. We are safe, and very soon father will be here, and Hurry Harry, and—"

"And Leatherstocking," finished Hetty, a look of childish inquiry in her eyes. "Judith, why did you name him last when you thought of him first?"

"Why, child, what do you mean?" asked Judith, her face flushing at her sister's words.

"I don't know why I said it," replied Hetty, earnestly, "but I'm sure it's true. I'm sure you've been thinking much about him since we first saw him yesterday."

Judith did not answer. She looked away, obviously embarrassed at the turn the conversation had taken, and busied herself with clearing away the débris of the shattered door.

"Halloo, Judith! Halloo, Hetty!" came a cry from without, and the two girls ran out on the staging to see Leatherstocking paddling rapidly towards the Castle towing the three canoes.

With joy in her heart, Judith waved to him and ran to the edge of the wharf to help him make his line fast to the piling.

Leatherstocking jumped lightly to the staging and looked at the girls, deep concern in his eyes.

"I heerd firin' and shouts down thisaway," he said. "Did the Injins attack you?"

In answer Judith pointed to the shattered door and in a few words told him what had happened.

"And you drove 'em away!" he repeated incredulously. "What a girl—what a girl!"

If Judith had flushed at Hetty's words, her face grew crimson now as she read the frank admiration in Leatherstocking's eyes. But quickly recovering her composure, she asked:

"Where is father? And Hurry Harry?"

"I've bad news to tell you," he answered, shaking his head seriously. "They're not dead, leastwise I don't cal'late the Hurons would kill 'em so soon. But they fell in with a war party and was captured. They're in the Huron camp now. When I see I couldn't be of any help to them, and heerd the firin' from this end of the lake, I come right away."

Judith swayed and would have fallen had not Leatherstocking's arm clumsily encircled her.

"Now, it won't do to give way," he said gently. "Your father and Hurry Harry are safe for a while. I'm to meet Chingachgook at the big rock an hour before sunset and to-

gether we'll find a way to save 'em, depend upon it."

The young man's calm assurance and the air of absolute dependability it gave him engendered in Judith a confidence that magically stilled her fears. She looked up at him with trustful eyes and smiled through her tears. Again Leatherstocking felt the spell of her beauty. His arm tightened about her and he drew her unresisting to him. Unmindful of the presence of Hetty, Judith pressed her cheek against the buckskin-covered shoulder of the young hunter and clung to him.

In a flash Leatherstocking came to himself. Like words impressed upon the mind in an evil dream, there came back to him the comment of Hurry Harry March, "—for never a white man goes near the lake that she don't see him or that don't see her."

Judith Hutter, the *woman* of Glimmerglass!

Leatherstocking shuddered involuntarily as he recalled the coupling of her name with that of the English officer in one of the forts on the Mohawk. His arm dropped to his side and he drew back. The spell was broken. His eyes had shown plainly what he felt for the few seconds the charm held, and the girl must have seen. His face hardened and he averted

his gaze, turning deliberately away from her.

"We must bide our time," he said casually. "Your father and March are safe for a while, I dare say."

All morning Leatherstocking maintained a moody silence seated on the doorstep and gazing steadily towards the distant spot on shore where he had last seen his companions. From his attitude one would have judged him to be working out some plan to rescue them from the Huron camp. As a matter of fact, his thoughts were no farther away than the boundaries of Muskrat Castle. More specifically, they were centered upon Judith Hutter, and they were such as to cause him deep concern.

When Hurry Harry March had spoken of what he was pleased to call "Jude's folly," Leatherstocking had paid little heed. He had seen few white women and they meant nothing to him. If he had ever given the matter any thought at all, it is probable that he accepted folly as one of the attributes of the sex, and the fact that it was numbered among the characteristics of Judith was only to be expected.

But now he had seen Judith, and the recollection of March's words caused him deeper pain than he cared to admit. March must have made a mistake; Judith couldn't be other than

all that was good and true. Leatherstocking bent his head forward, resting it on his clasped hands. For the first time in his life a sigh of anguish escaped him, and a woman was the cause.

As for Judith, if she gave the young man a thought, she betrayed no sign of it in word or action. She busied herself about the Castle quite as was her wont. She was not a little puzzled at the expression that had come over his face as he pressed her to him, but, woman-like, she put it down to sudden embarrassment at Hetty's presence. Vanity was not one of the least of Judith's traits. It greatly outweighed her powers of perception. Withal, she was rather pleased than otherwise, for she felt certain that Leatherstocking could not long maintain the air of aloofness that had twice caused him to interrupt conversations that gave promise of leading to less formal grounds of friendship.

When the three gathered about the table for the midday meal, Judith broke the silence.

"You seem sure the Hurons will not harm father and Harry," she said. "Why?"

" 'Tisn't the Injin way," answered Leatherstocking, reassuringly. "There's nought to be gained by killin' 'em so soon. To an Injin,

loot comes first and scalps later. The Mingos cal'late the Castle contains loot. They want it, only they can't get it without canoes. What they will do is offer to trade your father and March for what may be found here. Failin' that, they'll kill, but not afore that."

"Then why couldn't we offer something for father's freedom?" asked Hetty. "That would be the best way."

"Not yet," cautioned Leatherstocking. "Wait till I meet Chingachgook. The Sarpent will have a word to say."

"You seem to have great confidence in this man," remarked Judith.

" 'Tis confidence rightly placed," he returned. "Chingachgook is the son of a chief and I know no white man I'd trust so fur."

The long August afternoon drew on, and as the hour approached for Leatherstocking's departure for the big rock to meet the Mohican, Judith ventured to offer a suggestion.

"We three can navigate the ark," she said. "Let Hetty and me go with you."

Leatherstocking observed her calmly.

"Maybe it would be as well," he agreed. "The Injins have been here once. They might come ag'in."

And so it was settled.

## CHAPTER VII

### CHINGACHGOOK'S ESCAPE

As the sun dipped towards the western hills on the last stage of its journey, Leatherstocking roused himself from his moody contemplation of the wooded shore and made the ark ready for departure. Judith, who had spent the afternoon putting the Castle to rights and carefully returning her father's belongings to the chest from which the Indian intruder had pulled them, now came out on the staging followed by Hetty. With Leatherstocking's assistance, the two had succeeded in partially repairing the shattered door, and this Hetty pulled shut behind her.

"If all's ready, now," said Leatherstocking, looking up from his task of raising the sail, "we'd best be startin', else we'll keep the Sarpent waitin', and that might be onhealthy with the Mingos so close by."

"We are ready," replied Judith, "and let us start at once, please. This inaction gives me too much time to think of father's plight."

She looked towards the shore and the agony

of apprehension that she was suffering showed so plainly in her eyes that Leatherstocking felt a pang of remorse.

"There, now, Judith, my girl," he said gently, as he helped her to the deck of the ark. " 'Twill not do for you to give way now. We're just on the varge of comin' on the way to bring about rescuin' your father and Hurry Harry. Be brave, and we won't fail. The Sarpent wasn't named so without reason. He's as crafty as any Mingo chief in the colony."

Judith faintly smiled her thanks at his words of encouragement. She felt that he meant them, that they had not been uttered merely for the purpose of reassuring her. Soon she was bent on the task immediately ahead and, with Hetty's aid, the ark was swung about by means of the sweeps until the freshening breeze caught the sail. Instantly the craft leaped forward and bore directly towards the headland.

Leatherstocking, although not versed in the handling of anything more intricate than a birch bark canoe, decided to keep the ark close to shore to guard against the possibility of being carried off the course he had mapped out as the most direct to the big rock where he was to meet Chingachgook. He was in no wise familiar with the topography of that sec-

tion of the country and he had only the vaguest idea as to the exact location of the big rock. As nearly as he could determine, it was only a short distance below the point where he had landed Hutter and March the night before, and in this belief he was supported by Judith.

"It must be the rock at the mouth of the little stream that empties into the lake just beyond that arm of the forest," she said, pointing towards the south shore.

Leatherstocking looked in the direction indicated and a troubled expression came over his tanned face.

"Then there's need for haste," he returned, "for unless my cal'lations is far off, that's right beside the spot where the Mingos took their prisoners last night."

The ark was drawing near the headland, but so intent were the two on their observations that they failed to see an extraordinary object that came floating steadily and directly towards them. The trees growing down to the water's edge cut off a large part of the breeze that had speeded them on a few moments before, and they were all but becalmed in water as glassy as a completely sheltered forest pool.

"Judith! Leatherstocking!" cried Hetty. "Look!"

Leatherstocking turned quickly and followed the girl's excited gestures with his eyes.

There, moving toward them with increasing speed, was what appeared to be a small island of dried underbrush and leaves that rose perhaps six feet from the surface of the water. This floating island was fully twelve feet square, and as the three looked in amazement, a thin wisp of bluish smoke rose from one corner, followed by a tongue of flame that in an instant seemed to spread over the entire mound of twigs and branches.

"The Indians!" screamed Judith, pointing frantically to two copper-colored bodies that were now visible in the water guiding the flaming mass directly towards the ark.

Even as they looked, an eddying swirl of smoke, scattered by the breeze, disclosed a hideously painted Huron, who, blazing torch in hand, was spreading fire to all parts of the dried underbrush. As the tongues of flame roared about him, he gave vent to a terrifying war cry of triumph and leaped overboard, his naked body passing unscathed through the flames.

"The sweeps!" cried Leatherstocking, throwing his full strength into a pull at one of the

long poles. "Swing clear of that, or we're lost!"

But he was too late. Propelled by a final vicious drive from the powerful arms of the swimming savages, the blazing "island" bore down on the helpless ark and crashed against it amidships, the flames searing the faces of the three occupants and sweeping the tinder sides of their craft.

The time for words was past. Leatherstocking knew that the next few seconds would tell whether the ark was to continue its journey or become a floating funeral pyre for himself and the two girls. The tongues of fire squirming towards him and the acrid smoke blinding him and tearing at his throat, he unshipped one of the sweeps and drove its end into the roaring mass. A desperate shove forced the ark away from the fire-float and Leatherstocking repeated the operation.

The same thought had come to Judith and Hetty, and they were using the other sweep for a similar purpose. For a moment it seemed that their efforts were in vain, for each time the float seemed irresistibly drawn back to the ark as the lodestone draws the needle. But finally Leatherstocking managed to force the

float past the prow of the ark and it drifted aimlessly into clear water.

Freed from that menace, the three immediately turned their attention to the task of putting out the flames where the weather-beaten timbers of the ark had become ignited.

This task was soon accomplished, for the sturdy craft had bravely withstood this assault by fire. Out in the open water the blazing raft was rapidly burning itself out, but Leatherstocking wasted no time in contemplation of the terrible danger that had been thus narrowly averted, for he realized that Huron trickery outwitted but presaged greater trickery to come. Safety lay only in flight and even then its attainment was problematical, for no man could foretell when or where the Indians would strike next.

Leatherstocking quickly reshipped the sweeps and in a few moments the ark was making its ponderous way out towards the center of the lake, where there was a possibility of breeze enough to make up some of the precious time already lost. In this conjecture, Leatherstocking was right. Once outside the area sheltered by the great trees, the breeze made itself felt again and the sail stiffened before it. Driven forward by both sweeps and wind, the ark

*A Pathé Picture.*

THE CAPTAIN INSERTS THE MUZZLE OF THE PISTOL INTO THE GUNPOWDER

scudded over the waters of Glimmerglass due south towards the big rock and Chingachgook.

The hour of meeting had passed. This worried Leatherstocking not a little, partly because he did not wish to keep his friend waiting, but more because he feared the proximity of the Huron camp to the big rock might mean that the Mohican would fall into the clutches of his traditional enemies. This, he realized, would not deter the fearless Chingachgook. It was the Huron war party he was seeking. He had known of its presence three days before when the treacherous Briarthorn had stolen Wah-ta-Wah.

But Leatherstocking, lacking the redskin's stoical belief in fate, would have felt far more at ease could he but be assured that Chingachgook would exercise ordinary caution. Knowing the Mohican as he did, he labored under no delusions on that score. Chingachgook would as soon face seventy Hurons as one, especially when his beloved Wah-ta-wah was in peril.

So despite the best speed of the ark, Leatherstocking was chafing with impatience long before it drew within sight of the huge bowlder that now loomed up dead ahead and less than fifty yards away. He scanned the surface of

the rock and as much of the adjacent territory as came within his range of vision, and was disturbed to see two figures skulking in the underbrush that jutted out on shore a short distance below the point where the stream merged its waters with those of Glimmerglass.

"Steady," he called softly to Judith, who stood by the mast. "We'll stop here and wait. There's two Mingos in them bushes and Mingos never mean good."

He made the sweeps fast and lowered the sail. The ark came to a gentle stop and Leatherstocking again peered ashore.

This time there was no question about what he saw. The two Hurons were standing bolt upright, their eyes turned intently on the rock. Apparently they had not noticed the ark.

Suddenly a piercing war cry rang out. Leatherstocking thrilled, for he knew it came from the Mohican. At the same instant a tall, lithe figure rose on top of the rock and stood looking defiantly at the Hurons. From a spot behind the rock, two rifle shots rang out. The upright figure turned in the direction whence they came and his own rifle answered. A cry of pain told that his aim had been true.

"It's the Sarpent!" cried Leatherstocking. Then cupping his hands, he shouted:

"Sarpent! Swim for it!"

Chingachgook waved one arm in answer, and with a defiant glance at his foes, sprang into the lake as Huron bullets and arrows splashed the water around him.

To those on the ark it did not seem possible that the Mohican chief could win through the veritable rain of Huron bullets that chopped up the water about him. Leatherstocking stood as one transfixed, heedless of the fierce yells from shore, heedless even of Judith's hands which were clutching at his arm. The one thought in his mind was for Chingachgook, who, alone, was battling against such overpowering odds.

For the moment Leatherstocking realized that he had been considering the battle in the water not as a participant but rather as an onlooker, and he cursed himself for the valuable time thus lost. Chingachgook was swimming away from the ark, bearing off to the right, and thereby drawing the fire of his foes away from the ark's occupants, regardless of the fact that in so doing he was lengthening the distance he would have to swim to gain safety, for it was apparent that he hoped to circle one end of the craft and then board it from the offshore side.

Leatherstocking shouted a word of encouragement to the Mohican and, withdrawing his arm from Judith's grasp, he swung his rifle to his shoulder and fired. A Huron who at the moment was drawing a fine bead on Chingachgook from the top of the rock, crumpled up and lay still.

For the next few minutes Leatherstocking's rifle spoke as rapidly as his trained fingers could load it. Judith and Hetty watched him in awe, for here was a most amazing transformation. He seemed suddenly to have become the incarnation of that Spirit of Destruction of which redskins speak only in whispers. Human traits apparently had flown and left only a heartless mechanism which with appalling accuracy hurled death at the savages on shore.

Completely demoralized by this unlooked-for interference, the Hurons broke for cover and of the moment's respite thus gained Chingachgook took advantage. He was now about twenty yards below the ark, proceeding directly away from shore. With no apparent cessation of speed, he turned and his lithe body slid below the surface. Thus protected, he swam rapidly under water and soon was clambering aboard the ark.

The Hurons had had time to rally after the devastating onslaught of Leatherstocking and made haste to shift their attack. From the cover of a screen of underbrush they now poured their fire at the ark. Leatherstocking, however, had foreseen this move and already had ordered Judith and Hetty to take refuge in the cabin.

"Quick, Chief!" he called to the Mohican, who was calmly regarding the puffs of smoke from shore. "We must get out of here! Take that sweep—"

But the Indian needed no suggestion. He swung one of the long sweeps into position while Leatherstocking performed a like service for the other. Under their strokes the ark came about and made for the open lake. The rifle fire continued, but soon they were out of range and Leatherstocking took a moment's rest from the arduous work of manipulating the sweep.

The cessation of the shots told Judith and Hetty that the danger was past, and they came out on deck. There stood Leatherstocking and beside him was the Mohican, his copper-colored body dripping from the waters of the lake.

"This is Chingachgook, the Mohican I told you about," said Leatherstocking by way of

introduction. "Chingachgook means Big Sarpent."

The Mohican inclined his fine head with the dignity befitting his race. Judith stepped forward impulsively, her hand extended, and the Indian solemnly took it in his own.

"I am happy that you are safe," she said sincerely, "and that we were not too late."

"Plenty time," responded Chingachgook.

"These are the daughters of Floatin' Tom Hutter, Chief," Leatherstocking continued. "Tom and Hurry Harry March—Tall Pine—are now sojournin' in the Huron camp as prisoners of war."

"Chingachgook know," nodded the Mohican, gravely. "Chingachgook in Huron camp last night. See Tall Pine and one called Muskrat."

"Aye, that's him," said Leatherstocking.

"Oh, tell us about father," pleaded Hetty, clasping Chingachgook's hand.

"Not now," objected the Indian, shaking his head. "Get safe place, then talk. Here not safe."

"The Sarpent's right," exclaimed Leatherstocking. "We're too nigh to shore to do any talkin'. Them Hurons won't be in any too good humor now that we've tricked 'em twice

to-day, so we'd best make for the Castle at once."

So saying, he gave a lusty pull on the sweep and the Indian followed his example.

Much as she would have liked to press Chingachgook for details of her father's capture and his treatment at the hands of the savages, she realized that safety lay in a speedy return to Muskrat Castle. Wearily she dropped upon a bench on the deck forward of the cabin and resigned herself to as patient a wait as might be possible under the circumstances. Hetty soon joined her sister and in silence the two gazed away into the gathering twilight.

The scene that lay before them was indeed one of peace and beauty sorely at variance with the grim realities which twice that day had been brought home to them. Glimmerglass, now a dim mirror in the frame of dark forest that surrounded it, had been as a gentle mother to these two girls from the day when Tom Hutter had sadly lowered the body of that vaguely remembered being to her final resting place beneath its waters.

In the years that had followed, years during which Judith and Hetty had blossomed from

girlhood into young womanhood, Glimmerglass, Muskrat Castle and the ark had seemed places apart from the rest of this wilderness world that made up His Majesty's Colony of New York. From time to time travelers from the settlements had brought word of the seemingly never-ending warfare between England and France for possession of this land, but the actual conflicts had taken place to the east in the valley of Hudson's River or farther to the north where the mighty St. Lawrence flowed to the sea.

It is true that roving bands of Indians, for the greater part Canadas, at times brought war to the dwellers on Glimmerglass, but such instances were to be expected. The Canadas were not friendly with the "Yengees" and there was reason why they should not be. The French held Canada and French influence made itself felt in various ways, especially with the Iroquois. Therefore, the occasional approach of a war party meant little more than a few days' close confinement in the stronghold of Muskrat Castle.

But now all seemed changed. The still waters of Glimmerglass no longer reflected a picture of peace. The dark forests, stretching away to the north, held the menace of advanc-

ing French and Indians, stealing down and enveloping all that fair land in a cloud of war. No longer was this war a distant and intangible thing. The capture of Floatin' Tom and Hurry Harry had made it a personal and immediate conflict. The Huron war party now encamped on the shore of Glimmerglass was there for a deadly purpose. It was but the beginning of the French Commander's descent upon the scattered English settlements as a movement calculated to envelop the wilderness forts along the Mohawk and even farther south.

As Judith gazed off across the darkening waters, she felt a keen sense of loneliness. Her father, although he had objected forcefully to her frivolity and seemingly never satisfied desire for admiration, had always been to her a symbol of safety. His ingenuity had fashioned the Castle and the ark, and his bravery had been the strong bulwark between his daughters and the dangers of this wild land. Now that bulwark had been cruelly removed. Even Hurry Harry March could no longer be depended upon for aid. Reckless and undependable, not more steady than the thistledown that is driven here and there by every breeze that stirs, Hurry Harry, nevertheless, would have been a staff to lean on.

Now the defenders of the ark and the Castle were two strangers, a white youth who fraternized with redskins, and an Indian chief. The thought came with a distinct shock as Judith for the first time thus analyzed the facts. Turning her head, she studied the two men who in silence were driving the ark steadily towards Muskrat Castle.

The Indian's copper-colored body, now a shadowy brown in the dusk, swung forward and back rhythmically and with ease. The effort seemed no tax at all on the splendid muscles of his naked shoulders and chest. The scalp lock stiffly surmounting his shaven head had the appearance in silhouette of the proud crest of a Roman helmet such as one of Cæsar's warriors might have worn. Over the left ear dangled a hawk's feather, its position designating its wearer as a Mohican, just as its place in the scalp lock would have indicated a Huron.

Withal the Mohican in no wise suffered under this critical appraisal by the white girl. He was a chief, and the son of a chief; his lineage was pure—uncrossed by the blood of other tribes. His leadership was a birthright, and he assumed it as proudly as though his people had been as the trees of the forest in number. His haughty bearing gave no evidence

that the Mohicans were even then all but a vanished people or that the presence of his wigwam at the Delaware camp fire was the beginning of the end. Pride of race could not die even though his tribe was fast fading from the earth.

Now Judith's eyes rested upon Leatherstocking, and in him she could find no fault. Tall and straight as the pine, his buckskin clad figure gave promise of fully as much strength as did the body of the Indian. She knew him to be fearless, for she had seen him face the blazing raft and the rifles of a score of Hurons without a tremor. Just one question concerning him rose in her mind. Why had he drawn away from her so suddenly that morning?

Judith was not at all unaware of her physical charms. If any doubts regarding her beauty had ever existed in her mind, they had long since been dissipated by the words of various of His Majesty's young officers who by chance or intention frequently found themselves in the vicinity of Glimmerglass. What their lips had withheld—and that was very little—their eyes had spoken. But never before had she seen in the eyes of any man the expression of bitterness that had flashed upon her as she had raised her face to his there on the staging. It

was as though some slumbering hatred for her had suddenly awakened in his mind—but why?

The girl was roused from this unhappy train of thought by the gentle bumping of the ark against the piles of the Castle. Leatherstocking jumped to the staging and made a line fast.

"All safe and sound," he exclaimed, "leastwise for the present. Come, Judith, my girl, your hand."

Judith mechanically reached out her hand and allowed him to help her to the platform. Then followed Hetty and last Chingachgook. Without a word, Judith started for the door, but Chingachgook laid a detaining hand on her shoulder.

"Maybe Huron not on shore," he cautioned in a low voice. "Maybe in big wigwam. Wait!"

The Mohican moved noiselessly toward the door which he swung open. Then he was swallowed up in the darkness. For a moment that seemed many moments in length, the three waited, scarcely breathing. Then from the doorway came the welcome voice of the Mohican.

"It is well," he said.

## CHAPTER VIII

### WHAT THE SERPENT SAW

Although Muskrat Castle had safeguarded the Hutters from all danger as far back as Judith could remember, all now seemed changed. It had already been invaded and its chief defender was gone. Small wonder, then, that, upon entering, a feeling of apprehension came over her and for a moment she shrank back from the dark entry. Only the touch of her sister's hand upon her shoulder brought back her presence of mind, and in haste, as if to conceal the fear that was clutching coldly at her heart, she stepped inside.

"No make light," came the voice of Chingachgook. "Hurons too near."

"Cover the windows first," spoke up Leatherstocking, stumbling forward as he did so towards one of the two rectangular openings in the front wall.

The gray oblong was suddenly blotted out as he closed and bolted the shutter; then, carefully feeling his way, he crossed the room to the other window which he likewise covered.

"Now the Mingos won't know whether we're at home or not," he said, "unless they watched us land. But, anyway, we won't be livin' targets."

Thoroughly familiar with every inch of the Castle, Judith quickly found flint and steel, and it was but the work of a moment to set the tinder on the hearth aglow. From this, two candles were lighted and the darkness withdrew to the far corners of the room.

Hetty took upon herself the task of preparing a hasty supper for her companions. Cold venison and a coarse wheaten bread of her own baking were its sole constituents, but Leatherstocking and Chingachgook seemed satisfied that what was lacking in variety was amply made up for by quantity. Hetty ate little, while Judith made no pretense of eating.

"Now that we are safe for the moment, Mohican," she said to Chingachgook, "you must tell us what you can of my father."

The Indian was silent a moment, and then replied, slowly, "Muskrat prisoner. Tall Pine prisoner. Hurons bind them to sapling. Rivenoak not take scalp now. Wait—get Killer-of-the-Deer, Wild Flower and Pale Lily."

Judith shrank back in horror.

"Aye, 'tis my scalp he wants, not yours,"

explained Leatherstocking in an attempt to reassure her.

"But our fate—Hetty's and mine—would be far worse," the girl interrupted, shuddering at the thought.

Leatherstocking made no reply.

"Pale Lily," went on Chingachgook, indicating Hetty with a wave of his hand, "she be safe. Hurons say she child of Great Manitou. No harm her."

Hetty looked up in mild surprise.

"Then, of course, they wouldn't harm Judith," she said, with childlike simplicity.

"Wild Flower be Huron squaw," declared the Mohican. "Rivenoak promise warriors."

Judith covered her face with her hands. When she looked up again there was a light of grim determination in her eyes.

"Stop!" she commanded, rising and standing before the Mohican and Leatherstocking. "Enough of this! I am not interested in hearing what horrors are in store for us if we fall into Huron hands. Before that can happen, I will kill both Hetty and myself, so we may dismiss it from our minds. There is but one thing worthy of our thoughts now, and that is what steps we may take to bring about the rescue of my father—and Harry March."

The last came almost as an afterthought, and Leatherstocking thrilled at the realization that even in this hour of trial, March's safety could be almost forgotten. Then he flushed with shame at this ignoble sentiment. March was his friend, his companion on many a hunting trail, but March was also a thorn in his side. In their first conversation regarding the Hutters, this forest rover had blackened Judith's character in one breath, and in the next had expressed his intention of marrying her if she would agree. The two statements could not be reconciled, at least not by a mind as simple and direct in its workings as Leatherstocking's, and he knew that one of them was a lie. But how to decide which was falsehood and which truth presented a problem that even Judith's apparently slight regard for March's safety failed to render less formidable.

"Judith," exclaimed Hetty, in a tone of rebuke at this outburst from her sister, "it is sinful even to talk of taking human life, but if mine will save father, I will gladly give it. God has preserved us from our enemies thus far. He will show us the way now if we seek His counsel."

Chingachgook looked curiously at the girl. Such utterances but confirmed what Rivenoak

had said regarding her protection at the hands of the Great Manitou.

"Come, Sarpent," interrupted Leatherstocking. "You haven't told your story yet. What's the sitywation at the Mingo camp? How strong are the varmints?"

"Hurons plenty strong," replied Chingachgook gravely. "See," and four times he held up the fingers of both hands.

"Forty Mingos," said Leatherstocking. "Aye, that's none too good. Well, go on."

By dint of many gestures and frequent lapses into the Delaware tongue to express thoughts that were beyond his limited vocabulary of English, the Mohican recounted his experiences from the moment of parting from Leatherstocking on his quest for Wah-ta-Wah up to his plunge into the waters of Glimmerglass that afternoon. Judith and Hetty listened with rapt attention as Chingachgook told of his pursuit of the treacherous Briarthorn, who, with all the craft of the "skulking fox," had thrown countless false leads in the way of his pursuer, none of which, however, had had the desired effect.

Keen as the hound on the scent, Chingachgook time after time had picked up the trail of his enemy and fairly ran him to cover on

the outskirts of the Huron camp, which he had reached early the evening before. From a place of concealment he had witnessed the inglorious return of the Huron warriors from their unsuccessful attempt to slay the occupants of the Castle and he had noted with no little amazement that the leader of this band was none other than Briarthorn.

His heart had thrilled within him as he saw his beloved Wah-ta-Wah force her way through the ring of Hurons and impudently denounce the renegade Delaware for the coward he was. Then when the girl had been removed to a lodge under guard of an aged squaw, Chingachgook looked on at Rivenoak's preparations for a second attack on the Castle. Waiting until the warriors had started out on their bloody mission, the Mohican had left his hiding place and crept to the lodge in which Wah-ta-Wah was held captive. The squaw was sleeping and the maid was gazing with half-closed eyes into the night.

This meeting of the Indian lovers was as the meetings of lovers the world over, and Judith, all the romance of her emotional nature roused at Chingachgook's heroic exploit, would have given much to hear its details. But the

Mohican dismissed this interesting event with a gesture.

"Moon go down," he went on, "warriors return. Bring Muskrat and Tall Pine. Tie to saplings. Chingachgook crawl through grass, hide in bush. Then watch."

Rivenoak alone, according to the watcher, had held out for a postponement of the torturing of his captives. The warriors to a man, to say nothing of the women, demanded that the horrible punishment be meted out at once. But Rivenoak was firm. In the make-up of this ferocious redskin was no small measure of love for the spectacular. To kill two white men when there was still a third, as well as two white women to be accounted for, was not in keeping with his sense of fitness. With an air of finality, he ordered that the "Yengees" be closely guarded until he deemed it advisable to proceed with their killing, and in this he was supported by the crafty Briarthorn, who thus curried favor with the one man he really feared in the Huron camp. Sullenly the warriors acceded to their chief's command and dispersed to their lodges, leaving four of their number to guard the prisoners.

Quiet settled over the camp and Chingach-

gook made ready to steal away to a safer hiding place when again the grim note of strife was sounded.

From far down the lake shore a rifle cracked, and the warriors swarmed out to the now dying camp fire. Two of them rushed away in the direction whence came the shot and the others prepared themselves for whatever emergency might arise. Concealed in the bush hardly six feet away from the camp fire, Chingachgook watched intently.

Suddenly, off in the darkness to his right and some distance away, a Huron war cry shattered the night silence and was instantly answered from the camp as two more warriors dashed into the underbrush to the aid of their comrades. By this time the entire war party was gathered about Rivenoak, shrilly demanding that he lead them to the attack, but again his iron will triumphed, and his people were perforce held in check.

The minutes dragged themselves along until finally, when even Rivenoak's power seemed destined to fail, the four Hurons crashed through the underbrush. They were walking slowly and picking their steps with care, and the watching Chingachgook saw that they were carrying a body—the body of a Huron.

Up to the replenished fire they came, and gently laid their burden on the ground, as the assembled warriors and women crowded about. Pushing them rudely aside, Rivenoak stepped to the center of the ring and looked down on the figure that had all the semblance of death. In silence Rivenoak stood and in silence his fighting men watched him, but from the women came the groans and lamentations peculiar to the race when death comes or threatens.

"The Lynx is dead," they chanted dolefully. "The Lynx has fallen at the hand of the Yengees!"

"Silence!" commanded Rivenoak. "The Lynx lives!"

It was true. The Lynx was still breathing, and consciousness was struggling back, but the gaping wound in his left breast said more plainly than words that death was but a few moments away.

The eyelids fluttered and the Lynx looked up into the stern, impassive face of Rivenoak. His lips moved and Rivenoak bent forward to catch the faint words.

"Yengee," he gasped, his face drawn with the pain of the effort. "Yengee—eye of hawk —finger of lightning—Yengee—better warrior —than Lynx!"

A shudder passed through his body, and he lay still. The Lynx was dead.

Now the Hurons went mad with rage. They rushed at the two white captives, crying out for blood in payment for the blood of the Lynx, and for a moment it seemed that Rivenoak would be trampled under the feet of these painted furies, but only for a moment. The chief grasped his tomahawk and literally beat his way through the milling warriors until he had reached the stakes where the Muskrat and the Tall Pine were bound, then he faced the mob.

"Rivenoak is chief of the Hurons," he roared, and his fierce eyes gave emphasis to the thunder of his voice.

The warriors stopped in awe and instinctively drew back.

"Muskrat and Tall Pine are captives of Rivenoak," he went on sternly. "They remain captives until Hurons bring in the Yengee who killed the Lynx."

He looked defiantly at the warriors who stood uneasily before him.

"Rivenoak has spoken," he concluded.

Now Briarthorn, ever on the alert for an opportunity to impress the chief with his some-

what doubtful loyalty, pushed forward from the ranks of the warriors.

"Rivenoak is a wise chief," he began, "and a mighty warrior. The white man who slew the Lynx is Leatherstocking, whom the Delawares call Killer-of-the-Deer. He hates the Hurons. He is their deadly enemy. Every time his rifle speaks, a Huron falls, and at his belt dangles many Huron scalps. Let your bullets find Leatherstocking before the sun sets again. Bring in his scalp and with it bring the two white women that they may become Huron squaws!"

This eloquent flight of imagination regarding Leatherstocking's bloody intentions towards Hurons in general roused Briarthorn's hearers to a frenzy of excitement. Proof of its truth, so far as they were concerned, was provided by the body of the Lynx that lay before them. With a scalp and two white women for loot, no obstacle was too great to overcome, but Rivenoak interfered at this point.

"One of the white women is not for Huron hands," he warned. "The Wild Flower alone may be made a squaw, but beware of the Pale Lily. She is touched of the Great Manitou!"

Briarthorn was satisfied. The object of his

outburst seemed to have been the stirring up of hatred for Leatherstocking, and in this he had succeeded. What happened to the women was of no interest to him.

All this Chingachgook had seen and heard, and as he repeated it his hearers realized more clearly than ever the desperate straits they were in.

"Come sunrise," concluded the Mohican. "Chingachgook still kept in bushes by Huron warriors who guard Muskrat and Tall Pine. Chingachgook no can wait. Run from bush. All day hide in forest. All day Hurons move about. Chingachgook must meet Leatherstocking at big rock, so run to lake. Hurons see and follow."

And Chingachgook spread his hands palms upwards, signifying that he had finished.

"So Briarthorn is to thank for all this divilment," remarked Leatherstocking. " 'Tis like him. But, Chief, about Wah-ta-Wah—we can rescue her?"

"Wah-ta-Wah safe," answered the Mohican. "Hurons no harm her. Think too much of Leatherstocking scalp and Wild Flower."

"Well, my scalp is like to be atop my head many moons. No Mingo shall take it—no, nor shall they touch Judith!"

Leatherstocking slapped his hand on the butt of his rifle for emphasis.

"This means that every minute is important," declared Judith, firmness taking the place of the black fear that had possessed her. "There must be some way out if we can only find it."

"Aye, there is a way," agreed Leatherstocking. " 'Tis loot the Mingos want. What have you in the Castle that might tempt 'em? Exchange some trinket for your father and Hurry Harry. That will answer, I'll be bound."

So engrossed had they become that they had not seen Hetty rise from her stool by the table. She had said nothing since her reproval of Judith's great despair, but towards the end of Chingachgook's story the calm serenity had left her. Her gentle eyes lighted with a great purpose and her thin hands clasped themselves, not with nervousness but with suppressed excitement.

Quietly she rose and took her Bible from the table where it ordinarily reposed. Without a word she made her way softly across the room and opened the door. As she stepped through, a breeze caused the candle flame to waver.

Judith looked up.

"Hetty," she called, "where are you?"

"Here," came the answer from without.

Judith rushed to the door, followed by Chingachgook and Leatherstocking, but in the intense darkness they could see nothing.

From the end of the staging came the splash that told of a paddle pushed through the water, and Judith clutched at her throat in fear.

"Hetty," she cried again, hoarsely, "where are you?"

"Here in the canoe," the girl replied simply. "I am going to rescue father and Hurry Harry."

This startling answer left the three speechless with astonishment for a moment. Leatherstocking was the first to recover.

"But, Hetty, girl," he cried, "the forest is full of Mingo devils. You'll be killed, sartain!"

"I am not afraid," came the gentle voice from across the dark waters. "I am in God's hands!"

Judith dropped to her knees in an agony of despair.

"Dear God," she prayed, "protect her!"

"Come, Judith," exclaimed Leatherstocking, raising the sobbing girl to her feet. "We must follow her and get her before she reaches shore. There's other canoes."

"No can see to follow," interrupted Chingachgook. "No can find Pale Lily," and his hand swept the darkness that closed about them like an impenetrable barrier.

For the first time Leatherstocking saw that a heavy fog had settled down over Glimmerglass. Unlike the one through which he and Hutter and March had paddled the night before, this was not thinned by the moon's rays, for clouds covered the sky.

" 'Tis useless," he said, with disappointment. "We'd be lost afore we was ten foot away from the Castle. We must wait till daylight, that's sartain."

## CHAPTER IX

### THE FAITH OF HETTY HUTTER

There is no courage more beautiful than that born of an abiding faith in the will and power of God to render impotent the hand of evil. The soldier goes forth to battle, his spirit high with the pomp and circumstance of martial glory—his bravery strengthened by the force of numbers. The hunter takes the lone trail and faces its dangers without flinching, secure in his belief in his own prowess with rifle and knife. The fearlessness of both depends upon tangible things, but he who relies on a Higher Power—the intangible—follows a standard that is never lowered, even in the face of defeat.

Hetty Hutter knew no fear. When she had replied, "I am in God's hands," to Leatherstocking's appeal, she meant it literally. To her, God was no intangible ally. She saw His will in the raging tempest and in the calm after the storm. In the midst of that wild country she feared no evil for she knew His hand was ever ready to defend the weak.

The Indians were God's creatures, even the ferocious Hurons, just as were the English and the French. Being God's creatures, they could not refuse to hear His word, and He had counseled love of neighbor as of self. The redskin was walking in darkness, but never could he be made to see the light by means of bloodshed. The word of the Heavenly Father must be brought to him, and it was this task that Hetty had voluntarily taken upon her frail shoulders.

As she paddled slowly away from the Castle, her canoe pushing its nose into a world of unbelievable blackness, she saw not the difficulties and the dangers that lay before her. Glimmerglass lay motionless, unstirred by even the faintest breeze, and the shore was straight ahead. The fact that the clinging fog and the night combined to limit her vision to a radius of less than the length of her canoe meant nothing. There on her knees lay her Bible, and the light that its words of comfort gave forth was sufficient for her needs.

Slowly but silently she paddled on, unseeing. If her slender arms grew weary, she paid no heed. She had but one thought—to reach the Huron camp before it was too late—and as she drove the light craft forward she prayed that she might not be too late. Suddenly her paddle

touched bottom, and the prow of the canoe grated on the shore.

Hetty stood up, clasping the Bible to her breast, and stepped out upon the low-lying beach. Then she pulled the canoe up over the pebbles and turned her eyes in the direction she believed the Huron camp to lie, but she might as well have been blindfolded for the thick fog enveloped all in a cloak of invisibility. Carefully picking her way, she started forward. A gentle rise told her she had reached the level of the fringe of underbrush and she stopped, for she knew the growth was higher than her head and abounded in thorns. For a moment only she hesitated and then, bending her arm before her eyes, she plunged into the bushes. As she pressed on, the sharp brambles tore at her garments and scratched her hands and cheeks. Her hair was pulled this way and that with painful jerks, but she stumbled forward and soon passed this fortification of nature's making.

Inside the line of underbrush the going was less difficult. Great trees reared their ancient trunks all about, but between them were to be found fairly clear passageways like aisles in some huge cathedral in which the lights had been extinguished. In another half hour, Hetty

had proceeded far enough from the shore to leave behind the fog that clung to Glimmerglass, and the way now was more easily discernible. The darkness of night held sway, but it was not impenetrable and the girl could see sufficiently well to proceed with greater speed. Still clutching the Bible to her breast, she pushed on deeper and deeper into the forest.

Hemmed in by fog and darkness, Hetty had been unable to guide the canoe to the point on shore she believed to be nearest the Huron camp. When the prow had grated on the beach, Hetty had unknowingly stepped out on the headland, fully a mile above the spot she sought, and by walking directly away from the lake she was in reality putting greater distance between herself and her captive father. The stillness of the night alone was the means of setting her right, for once when she stopped for breath there came to her the distant thrum of war drums. From far to her left the weird sound rose for a moment and then was gone.

It could mean but one thing, and even her brave heart quailed at the thought. Failing in their efforts to kill Leatherstocking, the Hurons were preparing to take their toll in the blood of Tom Hutter and Hurry Harry March. She was too late!

With a sob, Hetty turned in the direction whence had come the hated sound and ran as fast as her waning strength would permit. On and on she ran, stumbling over fallen branches, slipping on concealed rocks and blindly colliding with tree trunks. She seemed to be impervious to such obstacles. The thought of stopping or at least of proceeding more carefully never entered her mind. Her purpose was one not to be denied and the Bible clasped in her arms seemed to give her the strength her efforts were sapping from her. Aching in every limb, her clothing torn, her body bruised and scratched and her breath tearing at her throat, Hetty made her painful way forward.

But nature is a harsh mistress. So far and no farther will she permit mortals to draw upon her, and then she exacts her payment. Hetty had overstepped the boundary. Down into a grassy hollow she fell and lay still. Weariness at last triumphed over her indomitable purpose. As a sleeping child clasps a well-loved doll in its arms, so did Hetty clasp the Bible to her breast, and there, utterly in the keeping of Him she trusted so implicitly, she fell into a dreamless slumber.

The Huron war drums that had called Hetty

towards the goal she sought now throbbed ominously. For the last quarter hour they had shattered the night silence, but the girl had been too far gone to hear them. Throughout the little glen in which she now slept so deeply they echoed and reëchoed, for just at the top of the hill in front of her was the camp itself.

It was a night of great import in the stronghold of Rivenoak's people. Since sundown the warriors had been preparing for the torture of their two white captives and the Chief had been forced to use all the great power of which he was capable to hold them in leash. In this Briarthorn was of much use. He had added his eloquence to the commands of his chosen leader and thus the two held out for hours against the insistent and clamorous demands of the tribe for the scalps of the captives.

Tied securely to two saplings directly opposite the curtain of Rivenoak's lodge, where they could see all that was going forward, Hutter and March watched the Hurons in their frenzy.

"Guess we're done for now, Tom," muttered March, keeping his eyes straight ahead to prevent his captors from noting his attempts at conversation. "Them Injins won't wait much longer."

"We're still alive," growled Hutter, plainly

disgusted at his companion's apprehension. "Shut up!"

March looked at him with a sneer.

"Facin' a violent death means nothin' to one of Captain Kidd's freebooters, eh?" he snarled, his anger at Hutter's terse order for silence getting the upper hand of the fear he really felt.

Hutter glared at him.

"You're a fool," he said quietly. "Here comes Rivenoak. Don't let him see that a paleface can be afeered."

The chief had left the circle of warriors that was forming about the camp fire, and with stately tread approached his captives whom he scowlingly regarded in silence for a moment.

"Rivenoak friend of Yengees," he said at length, addressing Floatin' Tom. "Rivenoak say no Yengee scalps until Leatherstocking captured."

"Rivenoak damn coward," interrupted Hutter. "No Yengee would be beholdin' to a Mingo dog for his scalp."

Rivenoak's eyes flashed in fury, but before he could speak, Hutter's tongue lashed him again.

"Yengees do not fear Rivenoak," he said, a

smile on his lips. "Mingos are children. Soon go to sleep."

With that he turned his head as far as his bonds would permit, and looked off into the darkness with studied indifference.

The Huron chief, cruel and ruthless as he was, admired and respected nothing so much as physical bravery. The insults that had come from Hutter's lips had infuriated him for a moment, but at the same time they had told him that here was one worthy of Huron ancestry, and he could conceive of no higher honor. He looked back over his shoulder at the wildly gesticulating warriors who were making the night hideous with their demands for Yengee scalps, and then he glanced admiringly at Hutter.

"Muskrat brave warrior," he exclaimed sincerely, and turning walked slowly back to the camp fire.

Angered at Rivenoak's persistent refusal to deliver the Muskrat and the Tall Pine into their hands, the Hurons now appealed to Setah-ga, the great Medicine Man of the tribe. A deputation of two warriors went to the wigwam of this dignitary and laid their case before him.

"The Muskrat and the Tall Pine are enemies

of the Hurons," they declared. "The Lynx now lies dead from a Yengee bullet. The warriors demand the scalps of the Yengees, for never will a Huron be safe so long as Yengees walk the earth.

"Talk with the Great Manitou, O Se-tah-ga, and bring from him word that his children shall have the scalps of the Muskrat and the Tall Pine."

Se-tah-ga considered this proposition from all angles and finally agreed to it. The warriors hastened back to the camp fire, where they informed the assembled tribe of their action. Silence fell over the camp as the young fighting men formed a half circle about the fire, and gradually there arose on the night air the savage throbbing of the war drums, accompanied by the weird, monotonous chant of the women that announced the coming of Se-tah-ga.

From his lodge stepped the Medicine Man attired in the full ceremonial robes of his craft. A long capelike garment, made entirely of fur, hung about his shoulders. Around his neck swung many strings of beads, bear claws and small shells that gave forth a sharp rattle with every move of his body, and legs and arms were similarly bedecked. In each hand he carried

a hollowed gourd filled with pebbles and these gave forth an insistent clatter as he shook them wildly. On his face he wore the most hideous mask which his imagination was capable of producing. Terrible staring eyes, set far apart, a long beaklike nose and huge grinning mouth from which great tusks protruded—it was a masterpiece of workmanship in which was combined all the horrors of Huron tradition. Small wonder, then, that it struck terror even to the hearts of the warriors, for to them it was the incarnation of a spirit.

"Mighty is Se-tah-ga," chanted the women. "He walks the forest path with the dead and speaks with wisdom from the Great Manitou! Mighty is Se-tah-ga!"

The Medicine Man came forward with a crouching walk. Lower and lower he bent to the ground, limping as one about to fall. Then without warning he gave voice to an unearthly shriek and sprang into the air, waving his arms wildly about him. This symbolized the lame, halting gait of mortals in contrast to the vigor and power of those of the spirit world and marked Se-tah-ga's transition from the one state to the other.

The leap had taken him to the very center of the ring of warriors and he stood for a

moment at full height before them. He was a huge savage, even without his priestly regalia, but with the great fur cloak thrown about him and the hideous mask on his face, he towered to an apparently prodigious size, the personification of one of the demons that fill Indian lore.

The challenge of the war drums grew louder, and from his own lodge Rivenoak watched the spectacle unmoved. This apparent insurrection against his rule had no effect on him, for he knew now that he had won his point. Setah-ga's incantations would continue until long after daylight, and Rivenoak, stubbornly set on adding Leatherstocking to his list of captives before turning them over for the torture, was confident that the coming of another day would reawaken in the hearts of his warriors a determination to make prisoner the last white man on Glimmerglass.

The two captives themselves watched the wild ceremonial dance of the Medicine Man with directly opposed emotions. Hurry Harry March, the bold forest rover and braggart, showed plainly in his face the fear of death that was clutching at his heart. His eyes stared in terror at the frightful figure that was leaping about the circle of warriors and beads of

perspiration stood out upon his ashen brow. Floatin' Tom Hutter, on the other hand, watched the dance with interest, an amused smile occasionally coming over his face. Neither spoke.

Suddenly Hutter became aware of another presence near him. He turned and saw Wah-ta-Wah, the captive Delaware maid, standing beside him in the shadow cast by a tall basswood tree. The girl placed her finger to her lips expressively and Hutter, quickly catching her meaning, turned his gaze back to the fire.

"Wah-ta-Wah escape from lodge," the girl whispered. "Come to help Muskrat and Tall Pine. How can help?"

"Wah-ta-Wah swim?" asked Hutter.

The girl nodded an affirmative.

"Wah-ta-Wah swim to Castle and tell Leatherstocking," he said in a low voice.

Wah-ta-Wah smiled in eager acquiescence and crept softly away. In an instant she had disappeared among the trees.

Daylight, gray and cloudy, was just breaking as the Delaware girl picked her way carefully down the steep slope that fell away to the north of the camp. Dimly she could see about her, and she knew that with the light momentarily growing stronger, her safety lay

in keeping away as far as possible from the direct line between the camp and the lake.

Down the hill Wah-ta-Wah hurried, keeping cover behind every tree and bush that offered concealment. At length she reached the bottom and was about to start up the other side when she stopped in amazement.

There before her lay a white girl of about her own age—a white girl with a great black book pressed to her breast. She was asleep. Wah-ta-Wah crept forward softly and bent down just as the eyes opened and looked up fearlessly into her own.

"What you do here?" asked the Delaware girl.

"I have come to save my father and his friend," replied the other simply. "The Hurons have captured them. I am Hetty Hutter."

"Go back quick," pleaded Wah-ta-Wah. "Go in Huron camp, be Huron squaw."

"But I can't go back until I have saved father," Hetty said in mild protest, rising to her feet. "I am not in danger. God has protected me thus far. He will protect me to the end."

Wah-ta-Wah drew back in awe. This was the white girl she had heard of—the white girl touched by the Great Manitou.

"I shall be all right," Hetty concluded, "and thank you for trying to help me."

With a smile of ineffable sweetness, she regarded Wah-ta-Wah for a moment and then began the laborious climb up the hill, from the top of which the war drums were still throbbing.

The Delaware girl, torn between her promise to the Muskrat and her desire to save Hetty, stood irresolute. Hetty would be safe, she reasoned. The Hurons would fear her too much to harm her. Wah-ta-Wah dismissed the matter from her mind. Her duty was to the Muskrat, and she ran up the opposite slope like a frightened deer.

Refreshed by her sleep, Hetty climbed rapidly up the steep side of the glen. Never for a moment did she relax her hold on the Bible. With her free hand she pulled herself over the rocks, and finally, breathless and flushed from her exertions, she stood at the top. The drum had ceased its incessant clamoring and the chanting of the squaws was silenced.

Through the trees she could see the circle of warriors, now standing menacingly facing a tall, dignified redskin whom she rightly took to be Rivenoak. Still in his hideous regalia, made even more garish in the daylight, the

Medicine Man was addressing the chief in fierce eloquence.

All this Hetty saw, but it made slight impression on her. She was looking for her father and Hurry Harry and at length she spied them. The circle of warriors was between her and the captives, but unhesitatingly and with no effort at concealment, Hetty pushed through the underbrush and made her way straight towards the line of Hurons.

Before she had advanced half a dozen paces, Rivenoak saw her and stared in amazement. The Medicine Man stopped his harangue and turned his ferocious mask towards the girl. The warriors pressed back to each side, opening a path through which this strange visitor walked as lightly and unawed as though she were merely crossing the floor of the Castle.

Straight onward Hetty made her way, an unearthly smile of content on her lips and her eyes bright as she saw her father. She brushed past the speechless Se-tah-ga, utterly ignoring the mask that struck terror to the bravest Huron heart, and then ran to the sapling where Hutter was tied.

Floatin' Tom, for once in his life, refused to believe the evidence of his eyes.

"Hetty!" he gasped.

The girl threw her arm about his broad shoulders and, raising herself on tiptoe, pressed a kiss on his bearded lips.

"I've come to save you, father," she said, "you and Hurry Harry."

## CHAPTER X

### WHITE MAN'S LAW

NIGHT dragged its interminable length across Glimmerglass and when daylight was still an hour away the fog lifted to such an extent as to rouse the three in the Castle from the dazed silence into which weariness and apprehension for Hetty's safety had thrown them.

"Now can see," remarked Chingachgook, turning from the open door to his companions. "Fog melt like snow in spring."

"The Sarpent's right," said Leatherstocking, placing a gentle hand on Judith's shoulder. "We'd best start now before daybreak comes, else them Mingos 'll be makin' a target of us when we go ashore."

Judith leaped to her feet, grateful for the end of her nerve-wracking vigil.

"Then let's be off at once," she exclaimed, with a sobbing catch in her voice. "Poor Hetty —all alone! We may be too late to save her!"

"Pale Lily be safe," declared the Mohican for the hundredth time. "Huron warriors no harm daughter of Great Manitou."

And Chingachgook touched his forehead significantly.

From the staging Leatherstocking now called to them and they silently took their places in the canoe he had prepared. Leatherstocking had not forgotten his rifle and the Mohican had been supplied with one of Hutter's to replace his own which he had lost in his flight from the Hurons.

Keeping well out in the lake, the three dropped down a mile below the headland and then paddled straight in to shore where a clump of willows overhanging the water offered a hiding place for Chingachgook and the canoe, it having been decided to leave him to wait for the return of his two companions should they be fortunate enough to return. Judith and Leatherstocking stepped ashore just as the first gray advance guards of daylight rode over the eastern hills.

"I cal'late the Mingos is some'rs off to the left and maybe a quarter-mile inland," remarked Leatherstocking in a low tone.

Then, as though suddenly recalling that a girl had elected to go with him in his dangerous mission, he turned to her with a look of earnest entreaty.

"Judith," he stammered, with evident em-

barrassment, "them Injins has no hearts. They would only kill me, but you'd fare worse than that. I can't bear to think of it—I can't let you come with me. It's too much to ask me to do."

"I'm not asking you, my dear friend," the girl answered, calmly looking into his eyes. "I simply can't let you go alone." Then in a burst of confidence that left her companion fighting for some semblance of the control he had exerted on two previous occasions, "If you must die now, I ask nothing but to be permitted to die with you."

Leatherstocking clasped her hands in his, too deeply moved to speak, and raised them quickly to his lips. Then he turned abruptly away, fearing to trust himself further.

"Come then," he said, and the girl followed him into the underbrush.

In silence they proceeded for some minutes, then Leatherstocking suddenly grasped Judith's arm and pulled her with him into the thicket. Breathless, they waited and there came to them the unmistakable sound of a body moving rapidly through the underbrush.

Leatherstocking swung his rifle into position for instant use as the crackling of twigs and the rustle of leaves drew nearer. At the same

instant there appeared before them the cause of the sounds that had startled them—an Indian girl running at full speed towards the lake.

"Wah-ta-Wah!" called Leatherstocking, for the moment forgetting caution in his surprise at seeing the beloved of Chingachgook.

The girl stopped and looked about her in fright.

Leatherstocking stepped from his place of concealment, followed by Judith, and an expression of joy lighted the face of the Indian girl. She ran to him eagerly, and, almost incoherently, partly in English and partly in Delaware, she told of finding Hetty and of her failure to dissuade the girl from entering the Huron camp. As she spoke breathlessly, her face took on an animated beauty that caused Judith to regard her with no little disapproval, particularly when she noticed that the small brown hands which Leatherstocking had clasped still retained their hold on his.

"Lead us quickly to the Huron camp," he exclaimed in the Delaware tongue, and Wah-ta-Wah bounded away in the direction she had come, closely followed by Leatherstocking and Judith.

The rapid pace set by the Delaware girl soon brought them in full view of the Huron camp,

and they crouched motionless behind a fallen tree through the still leafy branches of which they could see the assembled warriors that now stood as if petrified at the sight of Hetty reaching up on tiptoe to kiss her father.

"We're in time, Judith," whispered Leatherstocking.

"Oh, God help her!" murmured Judith as she saw her sister turn and face the savages that completely surrounded her.

A firm hand rested for a moment on Leatherstocking's shoulder, and Wah-ta-Wah whispered:

"Wah-ta-Wah go back now. Can do no more."

Before he could thank her, she had vanished in the underbrush as silently as a shadow.

"The Hurons are the children of God," suddenly came the voice of Hetty across the narrow space between the camp and the fallen tree.

Judith and Leatherstocking, the latter fingering his rifle nervously, fixed their gaze upon the girl as she stood calmly between the bound figures of her father and Hurry Harry March. She was addressing her words to Rivenoak, who glared at her with a mixture of awe and anger.

A Public Favorite. *Leatherstocking.*

THE GIRL THREW HER ARM ABOUT HIS BROAD SHOULDERS.

"The Hurons must live by God's law or they will perish," went on Hetty.

"White God's law no good for Indian," growled Rivenoak.

"The white God's law is for all men," declared Hetty, holding her Bible aloft in her right hand. "God has said, 'Whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.' "

Rivenoak looked puzzled.

"Not understand," he insisted. "White God's words for white man—Great Manitou's words for Indian."

Hetty's smile expressed infinite patience. Her attitude was that of a teacher trying with the utmost sympathy and understanding to impress a great truth upon the mind of a rebellious child. Again she raised the Bible.

"This is God's word," she said earnestly. "In this book He tells us to forgive our enemies and never to injure them for revenge. God is the Great Spirit."

Since few of the warriors were familiar with the English tongue, Rivenoak turned to them and explained what the white girl had said. Instantly there arose angry cries and the redskins, with Briarthorn in their van, pressed

forward menacingly. Rivenoak raised his hand.

"The white girl speaks strange words," he said when he had silenced the uproar. "She is touched by the Great Manitou. Let us hear her out."

Then he turned back to Hetty, who had watched the little by-play with a childlike interest.

"Why Great Spirit no send book to Indian, too?" he asked.

"He has sent the book to the Indian," the girl exclaimed. "I bring it to you, and I bring His message—'Love your enemies and do good to them that hate and persecute you.'"

The early morning sun now pierced the woodland and a shaft of golden light fell upon Hetty's upturned face, transfiguring it with an unearthly beauty, and even the Indians looked on her in awe.

From the hiding place, Judith was gazing at her sister as if she were beholding a being from another world. Her eyes were bright with tears and her lips moved in prayer for the child whose faith alone was holding at bay this horde of savages. Leatherstocking raised his rifle and drew a fine sight on Rivenoak's breast.

"We'll be sure of him if worst comes," he murmured.

Hetty's words were translated to the warriors, this time by Se-tah-ga, who was taking a keen interest in the proceedings. Rivenoak appeared to be struggling for an understanding that was long in coming, and Hetty took advantage of the interval to speak a word of encouragement to the captives.

"You will soon be free, father," she said, smoothing his cheek with her soft hand, "you and Harry—for God will let the Hurons see the right! I know He will!"

"My brave little gal," Floatin' Tom muttered brokenly, "my brave little gal."

Hurry Harry March said nothing. His face expressed utter despair, and, to the close observer, a fear that was rapidly getting the better of him.

At last Rivenoak seemed to have hit upon the line of thought for which he had been seeking. He strode to Hetty's side and glowered down at her.

"So that be white man law," he sneered, "to do good to enemies. Then why does white man not live by white man law? Why does he enter Huron camp to scalp women and children for gold?"

Triumphantly he stood over her, all the evil of his nature glittering from his eyes. Instinctively he knew she could not answer him. For once her white God and the white God's book had failed.

Hetty stared at him in dazed silence. Helplessly she turned to her father and to Harry March, but they had long since given up hope. No longer held in check by Rivenoak, the warriors pressed closer and closer to the pitiful figure of the girl, and one, bolder than his fellows, tore the Bible from her hand and dashed it upon the ground.

"Death to the Yengees!" he shouted, and the warriors took up the cry.

Waving their tomahawks about their heads, they began a weird dance, circling about the stakes and shrieking their hatred. But Se-tah-ga, buffeting his way to the center of the ring, raised his voice in words of command that rumbled hollowly from behind his hideous mask.

"The Great Spirit is near," he cried. "The Great Spirit would hold council with Se-tah-ga! Silence for the Great Spirit in the heart of the forest!"

The warriors stopped their dance, and the cries were stilled. Chanting in a monotone,

Se-tah-ga made his way through their lines and out across the clearing. Then he plunged into the wood, making straight for the fallen tree that concealed Judith and Leatherstocking. Around the end of it he strode, apparently in deep thought, and immediately was lost to the sight of the warriors.

Leatherstocking handed his rifle to Judith and crouched. As the Medicine Man stepped through the branches, his throat was caught in a grip of iron and his head was bent backward with all the strength at Leatherstocking's command. Steadily increasing the pressure of his fingers, Leatherstocking pinned the redskin to the ground and held him there until he had ceased to struggle. So quickly had the attack been made that Se-tah-ga had not had an opportunity to cry out.

Motioning Judith to help him, Leatherstocking quickly removed from the Medicine Man his mask, fur robe and necklaces. Then he bound his unconscious captive hand and foot with his belt and rifle sling. Forcing a gag of leaves and grass into the mouth, he fastened it firmly with his neckerchief, then he dragged Se-tah-ga into the deeper thicket.

In a moment Leatherstocking reappeared and rapidly donned the ceremonial dress of the

Huron dignitary. Before fixing the mask over his face, he whispered to Judith:

"It's the last chance!"

Judith stared at him uncomprehendingly for a moment. Then she understood. He was going to take the place of the Medicine Man in a last desperate attempt to save the lives of her father and sister. Before she could utter a protest, he was gone. When next she saw him, he was striding rapidly towards the waiting warriors.

"The Great Manitou has spoken," chanted the pseudo-Se-tah-ga in the Huron tongue as he advanced towards Rivenoak. "The Great Manitou is displeased."

Rivenoak drew back and the warriors, impatient for the word that would bid them attack their captives stood tense. Now Briarthorn, sensing that another delay was impending, took matters into his own hands. He rushed forward and, throwing Hetty brutally to one side, brandished his long knife in the face of Floatin' Tom.

"Death to the Yengees!" he cried. "Death to the White Squaw!"

Leatherstocking leaped at the renegade Delaware and dealt him a blow that sent him reeling back into the arms of the nearest warriors.

Through the eyes of the mask, his own burned with fury.

"Do you forget that the mad girl is sacred?" he demanded, towering above the stunned Briarthorn. "Dare to strike her down and the vengeance of the Great Manitou will be visited upon our tribe."

Briarthorn staggered to his feet, but before he could make answer, Rivenoak interfered.

"Se-tah-ga is wise," he agreed. "The Great Manitou would be angry if we harm the mad girl. But the captives—they must die!"

Leatherstocking lifted high the pebble-filled gourds of the Medicine Man.

"Rivenoak has spoken," he cried.

Then with a commanding gesture he waved the warriors aside and, crouching forward, he began the ceremonial dance that would culminate in the death of the captives. The Hurons went wild with excitement, their piercing war cries rending the silence of the forest, but, with due deference to the formalities of the occasion, they stood back until the supposed Se-tah-ga had finished his incantations.

Judith, who had all but fainted when she saw Leatherstocking in the guise of the Medicine Man advancing boldly on the camp, had regained something of her composure. With

the rifle in her now steady hands, she peered intently through the foliage and watched the weird dance that was destined to end so unexpectedly.

A crackling of branches to her left attracted her attention, and she turned in time to see the real Se-tah-ga squirming from behind the thicket where he had been tossed by Leatherstocking. The muscles of his half-naked body were straining and swelling as he strove to loosen his bonds.

For a moment Judith was motionless with fear, then swinging the rifle into position, she pressed her finger against the trigger. Se-tah-ga, with a final mighty effort, broke free and leaped to his feet, his eyes burning with an insane rage. Judith lowered the rifle despairingly, a sob shaking her, for she realized that the shot she contemplated would but draw the Hurons down upon her. It was the last shot. Leatherstocking had the powder and bullets. The last shot must be reserved for herself.

Se-tah-ga rushed forward towards the circle of warriors, and Rivenoak, his eyes staring, saw approaching him the man he believed to be even at that moment dancing the Dance of Death there before the white captives. Only

for a moment was he puzzled, however, then he understood what had happened.

"Stop!" he commanded, pushing the warriors aside and confronting the supposed Medicine Man. "You are not Se-tah-ga! He comes there!"

But Leatherstocking had already seen and was ready. He tore the mask from his face and hurled the robe from his shoulders. Rivenoak raised his tomahawk, but Leatherstocking crashed a powerful fist into the chief's jaw, felling him like a lightning-shattered tree.

The warriors crowded in upon him, but were at a disadvantage. They were many against one and they were so close together that the blows they aimed at him but fell upon themselves. Like a serpent, Leatherstocking squirmed and twisted this way and that, evading his foes, and in a moment had freed himself from the tangle of arms and legs. Then with a wild cry, he set off at top speed down the steep slope up which Hetty had climbed but an hour before. He hoped to lead the tribe away from the camp, thus giving the captives and Judith and Hetty an opportunity to make good their escape.

In this he reasoned well. Mad with fury at the invasion of their camp by the hated white

man and his desecration of the robes and the person of the sacred Se-tah-ga, the Hurons pursued in full force. Even the women dropped their customary occupations and, shrieking for the blood of the Yengees, joined this chase to the death.

Leatherstocking dodged from tree to tree in his downward flight, and, the moment he felt himself to be out of sight of his pursuers, he made a prodigious leap straight outward into space at a point where the slope broke into a steep cliff. By the narrowest margin his hands caught the overhanging limb at which he had hurled his body, and he drew himself up into the leafy branches.

He was none too soon. The Hurons crashed through the underbrush beneath him and were off in full cry along the top of the cliff in the direction they believed he had taken. Not waiting a moment to regain his breath, Leatherstocking climbed higher and lightly swung himself to the limb of another tree farther up the slope. In this manner he doubled on his tracks until, near the top of the hill, he dropped to the ground and crawled through the underbrush, circling the now deserted camp and working towards the spot where he had left Judith.

Certain now that all was over, Judith had watched Leatherstocking's brave attempt at a rescue and its sudden termination. When he had torn himself free from the milling savages and fled down the slope, she dared not even hope that he would escape. She saw that the camp was deserted save for her father and Hetty and Harry March. When Hetty rushed to the stakes, trying in vain to loosen the bonds that held her father, Judith started forward to help, but before she had stepped free of the screening foliage, she saw Briarthorn and a Huron dash back to the camp, evidently bent on guarding against any possible rescue. Then Judith's despair became complete. She knew all was over, and she only awaited the end.

A crashing in the underbrush behind her recalled her to a sense of her own peril, and she turned, leveling the rifle in the direction whence the sound had come. The leaves parted and there before her stood Leatherstocking. With a cry of joy she threw herself into his arms.

"My darling," she sobbed, her overwrought nerves breaking. "Oh, my darling!"

Leatherstocking held her close and comforted her as best he could. This was an unlooked-for development, one that he had fought to prevent. There was every reason why he should

not permit himself to love Judith—Harry March's thinly veiled accusations for one thing —and yet he knew that he could not long withstand the overpowering appeal she held for him.

"Judith," he whispered softly, "bear up. We must hurry. Them Mingos won't be thrown off for long. Come."

"But father," she cried frantically, "and Hetty—we can't leave them!"

"We must leave 'em. 'Tis folly to try anything more. Come!"

Not waiting for further protests, Leatherstocking caught up his rifle, and, grasping Judith's unresisting hand, he ran with her through the thicket, never stopping until he had reached the lake shore and the overhanging willow where Chingachgook waited with the canoe.

"Sarpent!" he called.

The canoe pushed its nose through the leaves, and Judith, in silence, took her place behind the Mohican. Leatherstocking pushed the light craft out into the lake and climbed carefully aboard. Then began a sad journey back to Muskrat Castle.

## CHAPTER XI

### RANSOM

Rivenoak and his warriors had not proceeded far before they realized that in some unaccountable manner Leatherstocking had eluded them. Vainly they traced the impressions of his moccasins to the edge of the cliff, and there they suddenly disappeared.

"Great Manitou is angry," announced Setah-ga at length. "Great Manitou conceals the Yengee from us as punishment for affronts to the mad girl. It is better that we return."

This seemed as good an explanation of the mystery as any; at least, it satisfied the Hurons. They turned in their tracks and made for the camp at top speed, fearful that the Great Manitou, as a further mark of his displeasure, might bring about the disappearance of the Muskrat and the Tall Pine. But these fears were unfounded, for the two captives were as they had been left, bound securely to the saplings. Guarding them were Briarthorn and the young Huron warrior who had returned with him.

Hetty, seated disconsolately on a stump, rose to her feet and approached Rivenoak uncertainly, but Se-tah-ga waved her back.

"We must send the mad girl back to the big lodge in the water," he said determinedly, addressing the chief. "The Great Manitou will strike us down with arrows of lightning if we harm Muskrat or Tall Pine while she is here."

Rivenoak looked troubled. He did not believe he could hold his warriors in check much longer, for they were thirsting for an opportunity to avenge the killing of the Lynx. But the Hurons were no longer a problem in this respect. They had heard the words of the Medicine Man and they wanted no further proof of the mystic protection that surrounded Hetty. She was now sacred in their eyes, and they drew back from her in silence.

Rivenoak left the group of savages, and, accompanied by Se-tah-ga, walked slowly towards the girl. His changed manner, intimating as it did a desire to help her, brought a look of joy to her face.

"Now will you hear the word of God and free my father and Harry March?" she asked, her eyes bright with the prospect of an end to all her troubles.

"Words of white man's God like music to Huron ears," replied Rivenoak, with a crafty look that was entirely lost upon the girl so earnestly was her mind centered on the success of her mission.

"Then you'll spare my father?" she exclaimed.

Without answering the question, Rivenoak went on:

"Pale Lily return to big lodge in water. Tell paleface hunter—"

"Leatherstocking," broke in Briarthorn.

"Tell Leatherstocking Rivenoak wants canoes so can bring Hurons and hear more words of white Manitou."

Tears of joy glistened in the girl's tired eyes and impulsively she put her hand on his, at the same time clasping the recovered Bible more closely to her breast.

"I knew God would make the Hurons understand," she murmured. "God is good."

Rivenoak smiled grimly at the ease with which his plan was working.

"Pale Lily go back to lodge now," he went on. "Huron warrior take her on raft, then bring back canoes for Rivenoak. Rivenoak bring Muskrat and Tall Pine for prove friendship."

Hetty eagerly agreed and, led by Briarthorn and the young Huron, she set out into the forest towards the lake shore. From a clump of bushes that overhung the water, the two Indians dragged a rudely fashioned raft, one of many that had been prepared for the attack on the Castle. Hetty took her place upon it and the Huron warrior skillfully paddled it out into the lake. Briarthorn saw them safely on their way and then plunged back into the forest.

About the time that Hetty and her Huron escort began their journey up the lake—Judith, Leatherstocking and Chingachgook were landing at the Castle staging. Despair seemed to have robbed Judith of all her faculties. She moved like one in a dream and apparently heard nothing of the conversation between her two companions.

"Thar's nothin' for it now but to make a trade," declared Leatherstocking as he gazed from the staging back towards the elevation where the Huron camp lay. "Them Mingos have blocked us at every turn."

"What can make trade with?" asked Chingachgook. "Be something in lodge?"

"Let's look around," replied the other. "Judith, my girl, think, now. What's in the Castle

we can offer the Injins as trade for your father and Harry?"

Judith looked up dully.

"In father's sea chest we may find something," she answered wearily. "But I've lost hope."

"That's very bad," remarked Leatherstocking, regarding her with concern. "As long as thar's life, we mustn't give up hope. And thar's plenty life yet."

The girl led the way to her father's room and opened the great chest, the locks of which had been shattered by the Huron tomahawk two days before. Leatherstocking and Chingachgook watched with interest as she suddenly turned from the chest and ran out of the room. She was back in a moment with a bundle hugged to her breast. Quickly she took off the rough cloth covering and held up to view a beautiful gown of richest brocade and lace—such a gown as might have graced the person of some beauty of His Majesty's court.

"My mother's dress," she said simply.

Leatherstocking's eyes expressed the wonderment he was experiencing at the sight of the first thing of its kind he had ever seen. Chingachgook, however, was not impressed.

"Be good for Huron squaw," he muttered. "No good for Huron warrior."

"True, Sarpent, true," agreed Leatherstocking, brought back to himself by the pronouncement of these cold facts. " 'Tis the Mingo warriors we must bargain with. The squaws are not important."

Judith replaced the dress carefully in its wrappings.

"Then, unless there is something in the sea-chest," she said, "I fear that way is likewise closed to us."

She bent over the chest and began unpacking it, holding up each article in its turn for the inspection of Chingachgook and Leatherstocking.

It was a motley assortment of treasure that Floatin' Tom had guarded so zealously. Men's clothing in various stages of disrepair made up the bulk of the chest's contents, heavy sea boots, buckled shoes, a variety of neckerchiefs and two or three hats. These were quickly rejected by the Mohican as worthless for purposes of ransom. Then came a pair of beautifully mounted pistols and a rusted cutlass which found favor in Judith's eyes, but Chingachgook frowned.

"No offer weapons," he said emphatically. "Deer no give hunter knife; bird no give weasel tooth."

Leatherstocking smiled grimly as he caught the Indian's meaning.

"The Sarpent is as wise as his namesake," he nodded. "Them Mingos have weapons enough now and to spare."

Again he plunged his arm into the depths of the chest and drew forth a small rough bag made of heavy canvas. With his knife he severed the draw cord and poured out on the floor a magnificent set of ivory chessmen that drew a cry of admiration from Chingachgook. These trinkets, which were exquisitely carved, were of another day and age and were much larger than common. Each piece had been made to look like the thing it represented. Thus, the bishops bore the faces of clerics surmounted by miters, and each carried the pastoral staff of his office; the kings and queens were of truly regal bearing, properly robed and crowned; the knights were mounted; the pawns possessed the faces of men, and the castles were mounted on the backs of elephants.

Chingachgook bent forward with the keenest interest, his eyes gleaming with the light of

one who had succeeded in a conquest. He picked up a castle and regarded it from every angle.

"Big moose!" he exclaimed, looking at Judith with evident pleasure at his identification of the strange beast.

"That is an elephant," she said, "an animal that lives in a far-off land."

Chingachgook attempted the unfamiliar word, but gave it up.

"Big moose," he repeated, evidently satisfied with his own classification. "Big moose with two tails. Be good for Huron. Big moose buy Rivenoak—buy whole tribe. Buy Delaware, buy Mohican—maybe."

Overjoyed at the Mohican's approval, Judith quickly picked out the four castles and gave them to Leatherstocking.

"Now we have something to offer for father's release," she exclaimed. "How shall we get word to the Hurons?"

"I'll go," he said, placing the chessmen in a pouch at his belt and grasping his rifle. "You stay here and the Sarpent will stand off any attack the Mingos might make on the Castle."

He started for the door of the bedroom, followed by his companions, and a figure appeared in the entry that caused them to halt in amaze-

ment. There before them stood Hetty, the Bible clasped to her breast. There was a pathetically weary droop at the corners of her mouth, but her eyes were bright with the elation of a great victory. Slowly she approached and a tired smile played about her lips.

"Hetty!" cried Judith, frantically clasping the girl in her arms. She could say no more, for in the excess of her joy at the safe return of her sister, tears and kisses took the place of words.

Hetty rested her hand gently over Judith's lips.

"Please don't talk—come with me," she whispered, and she led the three on tiptoe to the outer doorway through which she pointed to the farther end of the staging, in pantomime indicating her wish that all keep silent.

There, crouched on the edge of the staging, one hand holding a buckskin line which was made fast to a raft, was a Huron warrior whose eyes were fixed intently upon the four canoes that were tied to the piling. They looked at her without understanding and she beckoned them back into the room.

Chingachgook, immediately suspicious that the presence of his traditional enemy meant no good, remained in the doorway, his rifle

aimed at the Huron's back. Hetty touched his hand and said:

"The Huron is on a peaceful mission, for Rivenoak has given his word that we shall not be harmed."

"Rivenoak word like puff of wind," replied the Mohican scornfully, his eyes never leaving his target.

"But Rivenoak has heard the word of God," persisted Hetty, turning to her sister and Leatherstocking. "He wants to come to the Castle and bring his people so that they, too, may know the message of the Bible."

Leatherstocking looked incredulous.

"Rivenoak has promised to bring father and Hurry Harry and to set them free," Hetty continued. "All we need do is send canoes ashore. We have four, and the Indian who is waiting outside will take them."

This amazing information brought exclamations of surprise from Judith and Leatherstocking. Even Chingachgook voiced his astonishment in an emphatic grunt.

"Rivenoak lies," he exclaimed. "Hurons have no truth in them."

"It sartainly sounds like Mingo treachery," agreed Leatherstocking.

"Oh, I'm sure you do Rivenoak an injustice,"

said Hetty earnestly. "He wants to hear more about the word of God. I prayed so fervently that God has softened his heart."

The girl's belief in the miraculous power of her prayers to soften the fierce hearts of the Hurons was so sincere that even Leatherstocking, with his wide knowledge of Indian craft and treachery, had not the heart to press the point. Hetty's faith was too beautiful a thing to shatter thus rudely. He resolved to temporize.

"Hetty may be right," he said, with a significant glance at Judith. "We can't say for sartain that God hasn't made His power felt even by the Mingos."

"I'm sure He has," Hetty exclaimed with renewed hope, and she proceeded to tell them what had transpired in the Huron camp after Leatherstocking's spectacular but futile attempt to rescue Floatin' Tom and Hurry Harry. During the recital Chingachgook relaxed his vigilance and joined the interested group in the room.

When the girl had finished, Leatherstocking was thoughtful a moment. Then, taking her hands in his, he said:

"Hetty, we've much at stake and we can't take chances. Right now we are safe only in

the Castle and we haven't the right to resk lettin' the Injins get a foothold here. There is a way, hows'ever. We can ransom your father and Harry March."

Then he showed her the ivory elephants and explained to her his plan to offer them to Rivenoak in return for the release of Tom Hutter and March. The girl nodded her understanding.

"This Injin that brought you can take our message back to Rivenoak," Leatherstocking concluded, then he crossed the room to the door and looked out.

Unwatched, the Huron warrior was spending his time profitably. He had dragged the raft with one hand to a point within easy reach of the four canoes. With his free hand he was working desperately in an effort to untie the buckskin thong that held them.

Leatherstocking descended upon him as silently as a shadow and, grasping the copper-colored wrist in a crushing grip, swung him about.

"Mingo dog is thief," he cried. "Mingo come in peace to white man's lodge and steal canoes. Break word of Rivenoak."

"Huron not steal canoes," protested the Indian, squirming with pain as his wrist was bent

by Leatherstocking. "Huron wait to take canoes to Rivenoak so Rivenoak hear word of white man's God."

"Thar'll be no word from God for Mingos," said Leatherstocking, releasing the other's wrist. "Tell Rivenoak that. White men offer Rivenoak these for trade for Muskrat and Tall Pine. See!"

He held the ivory elephants before the eyes of the savage.

"Tell Rivenoak big moose with two tails bring much good luck to tribe," he went on. "Make Hurons strong on warpath. Help get many scalps."

The warrior was visibly impressed. He held out one hand and Leatherstocking placed one of the chess pieces on his palm. The eyes lost their crafty, cruel expression and took on a look of pleased surprise.

"One moose for Muskrat," explained Leatherstocking, pointing to the image in the Huron's hand, and then holding up another between thumb and forefinger, "and one moose for Tall Pine. You tell Rivenoak."

The warrior smiled in understanding and, handing the chessman back to Leatherstocking, he leaped down on the raft which he soon had underway for shore. Leatherstocking watched

him for a moment, and then reëntered the Castle.

"Now we'll see if the Mingos can be bought," he said.

Chingachgook, who had been standing in the doorway during Leatherstocking's conversation with the Huron, pointed to the shore just inside the headland.

"Hurons ready for come here," he exclaimed. "Rivenoak on shore now. Warriors have Muskrat and Tall Pine. Wait for word."

Leatherstocking looked in the direction indicated and there he saw a score of Hurons crowding down on the beach. In the foreground he could make out the figures of Hutter and March. Although they moved about with an ease that indicated the removal of their bonds, they were apparently closely guarded to prevent a sudden break for liberty. Towards this group the Indian on the raft was paddling furiously.

As the lone raftsman drew nearer shore the warriors on the beach, knowing from his haste that something unforeseen had happened, crowded forward into the water, the sooner to hear his message. He jumped excitedly out onto the sandy bottom and splashed forward until he had reached Rivenoak.

"Where are the canoes to take the Huron warriors to the white man's lodge to hear the words of the white man's God?" demanded the chief, a cruel smile about his lips at the irony thus expressed.

"White man's God has no words for Huron warriors," returned the warrior. "But white men have gifts for Rivenoak in exchange for Muskrat and Tall Pine."

The Hurons crowded about while he explained the nature of these gifts—the big moose with two tails—and, inspired by his own words, he waxed eloquent as he dwelt on the wonders of the little images and their powers to add to the glory of his tribe. At length, he concluded his story, and the warriors were silent.

"Moose with two tails," ruminated Rivenoak as though mentally listing the qualifications of the gifts the white men were offering him.

"Moose with two tails and tusks like the wild boar," corrected the story teller.

Rivenoak frowned thoughtfully. Then he turned to the warriors who still pressed about him.

"Make ready the rafts," he commanded. "Rivenoak will see with his own eyes."

All through this colloquy Floatin' Tom and

Harry March had watched their captors with renewed hope. They could not approach the group of warriors, for they were kept back by the four guards who had been detailed to keep an eye on them. Most of the words of the young Huron had reached their ears but, since neither had mastery of the Huron tongue, the meaning was entirely lost upon them.

"Looks like we've a chance, old Tom," remarked Hurry Harry, now having regained some small portion of his wonted spirit. "Them Mingos are doin' a powerful lot of talkin'."

"Can't tell what a Mingo means, even when he talks," grunted Hutter. "Maybe our scalps will stay on our heads—maybe they'll hang in some Mingo lodge. Don't be too sure, Harry."

At this point Rivenoak approached the two captives, a bland smile struggling with the habitual ferocity of his weirdly painted features.

"The Muskrat and the Tall Pine go to big lodge in lake with Rivenoak," he said. "Soon be free. White man in lodge offer gifts for trade."

March gave voice to a relieved laugh, but Hutter, his inborn hatred for redskins break-

ing out even in this delicate situation, flashed a savage look at the chief.

"All Mingos are liars," he snarled. "Rivenoak biggest liar of all. You'll never get aboard the Castle, I'll be bound."

Rivenoak smiled evilly.

"Some time soon Muskrat sorry he call Rivenoak liar," he said with unveiled meaning. "Muskrat's scalp none too firm on Muskrat's head."

And he turned away.

"You old fool," March grated at Hutter, "can't you let well enough alone? Why aggarvate the Mingos now?"

"Nothin's ever well enough with a Mingo," observed Hutter dryly. "We're no worse off than before."

An order from Rivenoak put an end to all conversation. Hutter and March were hurried to the water's edge, where they were astonished to see six large rafts held by Hurons. Each raft was well covered with leaves and dried grass so that the logs from which they had been fashioned were completely concealed. The Indians were climbing aboard, five to each raft, and Rivenoak took his place on the foremost one. The captives were ordered to their

places and their guards joined them. Slowly this strange armada got underway as the warriors swung their long paddles, and bore down upon their objective, Muskrat Castle.

## CHAPTER XII

### MINGO TREACHERY

"WHAT are they doing now, Judith? Tell me, please."

Hetty was standing on tiptoe in an attempt to see through the window on the shore side of the Castle. But the window was serving as a vantage point for Judith, Leatherstocking and Chingachgook and, consequently, Hetty could see nothing.

Leatherstocking and the Mohican were closely watching the shore, but Judith, not satisfied with what her eyes told her, had brought out her father's brass-barreled spy glass for a better view.

"They are all boarding rafts now, Hetty," she said, "and father and Harry are with them. And they aren't bound, dear; that must mean that they are to be set free. But where did they get those rafts, Leatherstocking?"

"Just what I've been wonderin'," he replied.

"Hurons build rafts to attack big lodge here in water," volunteered the Mohican. "No have

canoes, so build rafts. Chingachgook hear Rivenoak say."

"Well, that means that we're in real danger, then," observed Leatherstocking, seriously. "Hutter had best make for the settlemints as soon as ever he can, else his daughters will be the sufferers."

"Look now, Leatherstocking," exclaimed Judith, once more training the spy glass on the water. "They're all moving towards the Castle. The raft with father and Harry is the second in the line."

"Aye, so it is," returned Leatherstocking, "and now they're comin' so close we'll prepare for them. Judith, you and Hetty remain indoors and don't get in line with the windows. Sarpent, you take your rifle and hide behind that little breastwork that crosses the wharf just below the front windows. Keep all the rafts covered and shoot at the first sign of trouble."

"Then you don't believe the Hurons will keep their word?" asked Judith.

"No Huron ever did," he replied shortly. "Get ready. They're comin' near."

The rafts, carrying perhaps twenty-five savages led by Rivenoak and Se-tah-ga, were being laboriously maneuvered to the front of the

Castle and, at a word from the chief, started to close in when Leatherstocking ran out onto the wharf.

"Keep back!" he called to Rivenoak, aiming his rifle straight at the head of that dignitary. "Tell your Mingos not to come closer till I give the word."

Rivenoak's eyes blazed with fury at this curt greeting and he raised his hand, at which signal the rafts came to a stop. His voice, however, was like honey when he spoke.

"My white brother need not fear," he said. "Hurons come as friends."

"Mingos are no friends of white men," replied Leatherstocking. "They kill and take scalps without mercy."

"Rivenoak gives his word," insisted the chief. "Come as friends. No bring weapons."

"Rivenoak's word has no meanin' to me. He has lied to Pale Lily and his warrior has tried to steal canoes."

Rivenoak would have answered but his anger choked him. For a moment he seemed to be considering an order to his men to attack, but the hand of Leatherstocking kept the rifle disconcertingly steady, and he thought better of it.

"White men have big moose with two tails

for trade for Muskrat and Tall Pine," he said sullenly. "Rivenoak come see."

"Tell your Mingos to come three paddle strokes nearer," ordered Leatherstocking, "but keep other rafts where they are."

Rivenoak's raft was driven forward the stated distance and Leatherstocking, leaning over, tossed one of the chessmen aboard. The chief stooped and picked it up curiously. He turned it this way and that, and then handed it over to Se-tah-ga for further examination.

From the window Judith had the spy glass trained on the raft on which her father and Hurry Harry stood guarded by four Hurons. For the last few minutes she had noticed her father's right hand pointing downward and evidently attempting to draw the attention of Leatherstocking to the floor of the raft. Quickly she turned the glass to the raft itself, and a stealthy movement of her father's foot for a moment swept aside the leaves and branches, disclosing bows, arrows and tomahawks. Then Hutter expressively moved his hands about in a way that told her all the rafts carried stores of weapons similarly concealed.

Judith's heart turned cold within her. This,

then, was but another bit of Huron treachery!

Waiting for nothing more, she ran out upon the staging and pressed close to Leatherstocking's side.

"The Hurons are armed," she whispered. "The leaves on the rafts cover bows and arrows and tomahawks!"

Leatherstocking nodded his understanding, keeping both his eyes and his rifle trained upon Rivenoak. He knew what to expect when dealing with these deadly foes of his race, and he was not surprised. By keeping the chief constantly within range, however, he hoped to forestall the attack that very evidently had been planned carefully.

"Don't be afeered, Judith," he said in a low tone, speaking from the corner of his mouth. "We've got the upper hand thus far. Go back in the Castle and keep under cover."

The girl turned and did as he directed.

Apparently Rivenoak had not witnessed Judith's action, for when he looked up he gave no evidence of having seen her. Se-tah-ga handed him the ivory elephant and the chief called out to Leatherstocking:

"Big moose with two tails good for Hurons. Bring victory in war. Make Hurons strong. Scalps of Muskrat and Tall Pine worth more.

You give four moose for Muskrat, four for Tall Pine?"

Leatherstocking looked sharply at his questioner. This was more than he had bargained for and he was in a quandary. The chess set contained but four castles altogether. He could not meet the offer if he would.

"Rivenoak greedy," he said. "Four moose for Muskrat and four moose for Tall Pine too many. Give two for Muskrat and two for Tall Pine."

The chief heard the counter-proposition and bent his head in conversation with Se-tah-ga.

While this dickering was going on, Chingachgook, from his place of concealment behind the log breastwork back of Leatherstocking, kept his eyes fixed on the line of rafts. He knew his companion could be held accountable for Rivenoak's raft, but the others he considered his own special charge.

Suddenly he saw that the raft immediately to the right of the one on which Hutter and March stood held only three Indians instead of the five he knew it had carried but a moment before. Startled at this discovery, he swept his quick glance over each raft in turn and as he did so he saw two Hurons slide silently from another raft and disappear be-

neath the water. In a flash he realized what was happening.

While Rivenoak was engaging Leatherstocking in a meaningless controversy, from each raft one or two warriors were dropping stealthily into the lake and were swimming under water to the Castle, to climb up on the staging and overpower the defenders. The Mohican grew rigid as he watched and waited for the appearance of the first Huron scalp lock to show above the water.

Rivenoak turned back to Leatherstocking.

"Two moose for Muskrat, two for Tall Pine, be all right," he agreed.

Leatherstocking tossed a second chessman to the raft.

"Now release Muskrat and Tall Pine," he ordered, holding the two remaining symbols of ransom in his open hand.

Rivenoak called an order to the four warriors guarding the captives, and one by one they dove over the side, leaving Hutter and March alone on the raft.

"Give me them paddles," roared Floatin' Tom to the Hurons who were swimming rapidly towards the nearest raft.

They did not seem inclined to obey, but another word of command had the desired result

and the paddles were pushed towards Tom, who grasped them. In another moment he and March were paddling towards the Castle, some twenty-five yards distant.

True to his word Leatherstocking tossed the other two chessmen to Rivenoak's raft and, as he did so, a rifle shot rang out behind him. He leaped back in time to see a Huron warrior plunge from the staging into the water. It was the first wave of the attack from under water and Chingachgook's bullet had found its mark. Instantly two more Huron scalp locks appeared above the edge of the wharf and then half a dozen warriors clambered from the water. With tomahawks raised, they leaped at Leatherstocking and Chingachgook.

Leatherstocking fired and one of the Hurons pitched forward on his face. The others leaped over the prostrate body and closed in on the two defenders of the Castle, who, swinging their rifles like clubs, valiantly fought off their assailants.

From the doorway, Judith witnessed the attack, and she saw that Leatherstocking and Chingachgook could not long hold out against the overpowering number of Hurons that now paddled their rafts towards the staging. From the bosom of her dress she drew one of the

silver-mounted pistols and, taking careful aim, she fired at a Huron whose upraised tomahawk was menacing the head of Leatherstocking. The arm dropped limply, and the Huron, uttering a scream of pain, withdrew from the fight.

This gave Leatherstocking the opportunity he wanted. Swinging his long rifle by the barrel, he gave voice to a piercing Delaware war cry and literally beat his way through the savages to the side of Chingachgook. Back to back, he and the Mohican valiantly held off the Hurons until, for a moment, the attacking redskins were driven to the end of the wharf.

Judith, both pistols in her hands, rushed from the doorway and took up a post beside Leatherstocking, who was taking advantage of the moment's respite to reload his rifle. Again a dozen Hurons charged down the wharf, and Judith's pistols spoke.

"Judith," cried Hetty from the window. "The rafts!"

Judith looked quickly over her shoulder and saw two rafts making fast to the piling. From the one nearest her, Rivenoak leaped up to the wharf, and waved the others to follow him.

Strengthened by the appearance of their chief, the Hurons already on the wharf cast

all caution to the winds. With wild cries, they leaped upon Leatherstocking and Chingachgook. Judith was carried from her feet by the onslaught, but the strong arm of Leatherstocking swept her behind him. Then began a battle which for years after was famous wherever men foregathered in the colony.

Weaponless, Leatherstocking threw himself at the massed savages. A tomahawk whizzed past his face and he wrenched its mate from the hand of a Huron and sent its stone head deep into the skull of a warrior who was reaching eager hands towards Judith. Leatherstocking knew the odds against him were almost hopeless, but he was fighting for the woman he loved. No longer did any doubt exist in his mind on that point.

Through the maze of twisting, storming savages, he caught a glimpse of an evil face that he had learned to hate as he had never hated human being before. It was that of Rivenoak. Everything else seemed to fade into nothing. Rivenoak alone stood out in his battle-crazed vision.

With superhuman strength, Leatherstocking tore his way through the swinging tomahawks. His fists beat down every savage who dared stand before them and once he lifted a Huron

bodily and hurled him into the lake. One last terrible drive, and he was face to face with Rivenoak.

"Now, Mingo!" he cried.

Rivenoak raised his tomahawk, but before he could aim a blow Leatherstocking was upon him. With one hand he disarmed his foe and with the other he sent a crushing blow to the chief's jaw. Rivenoak dropped in his tracks.

Drawing his long hunting knife, Leatherstocking knelt and pressed its point against the Huron's throat. Thunderstruck at this sudden turn of the tide of battle, the savages drew back.

"Get on your rafts, you Mingo dogs!" roared Leatherstocking. "Get on your rafts, or your chief's scalp hangs on the door of Muskrat Castle!"

The Hurons could not believe the evidence of their own eyes. That one man should have fought as Leatherstocking had done was a severe enough tax on their credulity, but that he should even then hold the life of their chief in his hands was utterly beyond the bounds of the possible.

Rivenoak struggled back to consciousness and looked up into the face of his conqueror with undying hatred.

"Tell them, Mingo, to start for shore," commanded Leatherstocking, pressing the point of his knife still deeper, "or Rivenoak goes to be judged by the Great Manitou!"

Rivenoak turned his head slightly. At the other end of the wharf Chingachgook was a captive in the hands of four warriors who were pinning him down, anxiously awaiting the outcome of Leatherstocking's coup. Judith was likewise a prisoner. Hutter and March on their raft were again in Huron hands.

But in spite of this, the Hurons were powerless. Their chief was in the shadow of an ignominious death, and they dared not move.

Surmising what was passing in Rivenoak's mind, Leatherstocking smiled grimly.

"Release your prisoners, Mingo," he said firmly, "and tell your warriors to return to shore, or you die!"

Rivenoak was beaten. Hoarsely he called out to his men and they obeyed. Judith's captors released their hold of her arms and ran to their raft, which they shoved off in haste. The captors of Chingachgook followed the example thus set, and the Hurons who had recaptured Hutter and March unceremoniously leaped over the side. In a moment the staging was

deserted and the rafts were being propelled towards the shore with all possible speed.

Leatherstocking stood up and looked at the fallen chief.

"Get up!" he commanded roughly.

Rivenoak leaped to his feet and stood glaring at the victor.

"Now, Mingo, swim for it!" cried Leatherstocking, as he gave the Huron a vigorous push that sent him headlong into the water.

Rivenoak struggled to the surface and swam rapidly towards the nearest raft which waited for him. When Hutter and March pulled alongside the staging, the last of the Hurons were nearing the shore.

Grimness and silence were so much parts of Hutter's nature that the expression of any emotion other than anger or impatience seemed utterly foreign to him. It is true that he had been visibly moved when Hetty braved the Huron camp alone in an effort to bring about his release, but that was at a time when death seemed only a few moments away, and man's nature may be excused for asserting itself in its true guise in the awful presence.

Now, however, when he stepped on the staging, once more in possession of his freedom,

he became again the taciturn master of Muskrat Castle. Judith and Hetty flung themselves into his arms, their kisses and terms of endearment mingling with joyful tears, but, aside from pressing them closely to his breast and burying his face for the briefest instant in Hetty's golden hair, he maintained a stoical control of face and action.

"Thar, now, my gals," he said, with a gentle note in his gruff voice, "we're all safe and sound, but not out of the woods yet."

Leatherstocking was regarding him curiously, for he did not understand how a father could be unmoved at these evidences of love from his daughters. Such apparent callousness, especially where Judith was concerned, was beyond his comprehension. He tried to picture himself standing coldly by while Judith's arms circled his neck and Judith's lips pressed against his. The task was too great for his imagination, and he sighed as he watched Hutter pull gently away from his daughters.

"Young man," he called out, turning to Leatherstocking, whose hand he gripped firmly, " 'twas a brave fight you made. I've never seen a better. I'm obleeged to you for protectin' my gals, and for savin' me as well."

" 'Tis little enough to do for a friend," Leatherstocking replied with evident embarrassment, "but I was afeered all I could do would be far too little. Luck had much to do with it—luck and the courage of your daughters."

"It wasn't luck that caused you to capture Rivenoak himself," declared Judith, with undisguised admiration shining in her eyes. "Such bravery and strength I never saw before."

"Oh, 'twas luck as much as anything," interrupted March, who had been looking on with a growing anger.

He strode up to the little group and from his great height looked down with contempt on the stripling Leatherstocking who had outfought and outwitted an entire Huron war party.

" 'Twas your luck to be here with Jude," he snarled, "and mine to be a prisoner. Small wonder she's so loud in your praise. I'll warrant you made the most of your time."

Leatherstocking was slow to comprehend the meaning so obvious in this sudden outburst from the man he called friend, but Judith whirled on March, her face flaming.

"How dare you say such a thing!" she de-

manded indignantly. "You, Harry March—braggart, bully—coward!"

The last word was fairly shrieked, and March winced at her fury. But she had not finished.

"Had it not been for you encouraging father in a scalp hunt, this would not have happened," she cried. "You would scalp a sleeping Huron warrior or a squaw for gold! But you make a sorry sight when you attempt to belittle a brave man—a real man! You are unspeakable!"

Judith turned abruptly and ran into the Castle, leaving both the man she defended and the man she attacked staring after her in bewilderment.

Hutter looked after her and scratched his head.

"Jude must be a bit overwrought!" he observed.

## CHAPTER XIII

### UNMASKED

Early evening found the inhabitants of the Castle grave and thoughtful. Once more they were united, but they knew that they were no longer safe from attack. Rivenoak had been bested for the moment, but his was not the nature to forget the indignities heaped upon him by the hated Yengees. He would strike again, that was certain. And when he did, it might safely be assumed that he would throw all his power into the blow.

"Every minute we stay here jist adds to the danger," Leatherstocking remarked. "The Mingos outnumber us near ten to one in fightin' men alone. They can reach the Castle whenever they wish with their rafts. That means that they can surround us, and then we might as well give up. My advice to you, Hutter, is to take your girls and make for the settlemints —this very night."

"And you," asked Judith with concern, "would you come with us?"

March glared at the girl as she put this question, although he thought it best not to speak his mind.

"No," answered Leatherstocking, "not I. I've a mission to perform—two, in truth. First I must help the Sarpent get Wah-ta-Wah away from the Mingos. Second, I must carry Tamenund's message to the tribes beyond the lake. I may yet be in time to keep them from j'inin' with the French."

Floatin' Tom looked up with the air of a man in pursuit of an elusive thought. Then he slapped his knee.

"Hold hard," he cried. "But for you namin' the Injin gal, I'd never ha' remembered! Listen, ye, Mohican!"

Chingachgook, who had maintained a grim silence ever since March had shown his true colors, drew closer.

"Mohican," said Hutter, "the Injin gal, Wah-ta-Wah, bade me give you this message. She crept up to me while the Mingos was makin' ready to bring us to the Castle. There's a big bright star comes over the hill by the camp an hour after dark sets in. When that star comes in sight to-night she'll be waitin' for you at the foot of the cliff."

Chingachgook said no word, but his eyes

HE HELD THE IVORY ELEPHANTS BEFORE THE EYES OF THE SAVAGE.

shone with the joy he felt at this message from his beloved.

"And, mind ye, Mohican," Hutter went on earnestly, "don't fail the gal. Rivenoak has promised her to Briarthorn as his squaw. She told me that."

The Mohican's muscles grew tense.

"Chingachgook not fail," he muttered grimly.

"And I'll be with ye, Sarpent," exclaimed Leatherstocking, with enthusiasm, grasping his friend's hand.

Judith was ill at ease. Since the scene on the wharf she had not spoken a word to March. She had studiously ignored him, but she was conscious of the fact that never for a moment had his angry eyes left her. March's attentions had long been odious to her, for she resented his air of proprietorship. Now she felt that she could endure him no longer, but deep down in her heart was the fear that he might revenge himself not upon her but upon Leatherstocking, and this caused her no little apprehension for the consequences of her recent outburst.

Quietly she left the group in the Castle and sought the cool evening air on the staging. Dusk was falling and the sky was overcast,

boding ill for the rising star as the signal for Chingachgook's attempt at rescuing the Delaware girl. A footfall behind Judith caused her to turn with a start and she saw the towering bulk of Hurry Harry.

"Buildin' air castles, I suppose," he said, with an attempt at lightness.

Judith turned her back upon him, but he stepped in front of her.

"You're fallin' in love with Leatherstocking," he went on hoarsely. "I won't stand it!"

The girl regarded him coldly for a moment.

"I don't recognize your right to question me or my thoughts," she declared. "Please leave me."

But March was past the point where reason dictated his words. He bent over her and the look in his eyes caused her to draw back in fright.

"He is a coward," March raged. "He knew you were mine, but he made love to you while I was a prisoner in the Mingo camp. Well, by God, he'll never take you from me, Judith!"

"Stop!" she commanded, all fear gone in a burst of anger at this unjust accusation. "He risked his life to save father and you! Would you be ingrate as well as—"

A sudden glare of light burst over the staging and an arrow, its head bound around with a small bundle of blazing twigs, fell at their feet. Judith screamed in terror and Leatherstocking and Chingachgook came in answer to her cry. At a glance, the two understood. Leatherstocking stamped out the fire and picked up the arrow, an expression of deep concern on his face.

" 'Tis Rivenoak's message of war," he exclaimed. "Now it's a fight to the death!"

March ran to the edge of the wharf and peered out across the water.

"Thar's the Injin that did it," he cried, pointing.

The others looked and saw a small raft being paddled rapidly away from the Castle by a Huron who was crouched upon it. At that moment, Hutter appeared in the doorway with his rifle in the hollow of his arm. March leaped towards him and tore the weapon away. He raised it and took careful aim at the escaping Indian, but Leatherstocking struck the barrel aside and the bullet went harmlessly into the air.

"A coward's trick, Harry," he exclaimed. "The Mingo caught us nappin'. He delivered

his message fair and square, and we'll have no shootin' of him in the back when he's tryin' to escape."

Judith turned her eyes away, fully expecting that March would forcibly resent this interference with his plans, but she was needlessly alarmed. March stood glaring angrily at Leatherstocking, who looked straight into his eyes unflinchingly.

"That's what comes of havin' to do with a white Injin," he said, his lip curling in scorn. "Never mind, my time's a-comin', and when it does, we'll have a full settlin' of accounts."

With that, March stalked away to the other end of the wharf. He, too, had made a declaration of war, and Judith's heart told her that his manner of warfare would be little less inhuman than that of the Hurons.

Leatherstocking frowned, but otherwise ignored this open threat. He understood the cause of March's enmity or at least he assumed it to be his own feeling for Judith, and he flushed at the thought that his love had been so evident, even though he had spoken no word of it. What he did not know, of course, was Judith's rejection of Harry a few moments before.

"We've not a chance if they attack us in

force to-night," Hutter broke into his train of thought.

"Aye, there's truth in that," agreed Leatherstocking. "I hold as I held before—abandon the Castle and take to the ark at once. There we can at least keep movin', and movin' faster than the Mingos on their rafts."

This suggestion was immediately acted upon, and for the next few minutes the Castle bustled with activity as all the necessary articles of household use were transferred to the cabin of the ark. At length the preparations were complete and Leatherstocking glanced up at the heavy sky.

"Come, Sarpent," he said, turning to the Mohican, "we'd best be makin' for shore. The star won't show this night."

"Chingachgook ready," came the answer.

By this time the entire party had boarded the ark, and Hutter and March pulled carefully on the sweeps, getting it slowly under way. One of the four canoes that trailed at the stern was brought alongside and the Mohican, clasping his rifle, stepped lightly into it. Hutter loosened his hold on the sweep and bent nearer Leatherstocking.

"Can we do aught to help you?" he asked in a low tone.

Leatherstocking shook his head.

"'Tis all in God's hands now," he said solemnly. "For safety's sake let no noise come from the ark. When we reach the Mingo camp, a sound to attract their attention would be fatal to us. The cry of the loon will be our signal that we've arrived safely. After that keep silence here, or we're lost."

"Have no fear, lad," Hutter pressed Leatherstocking's hand; "it shall be as you say. And now, luck to you!"

Leatherstocking stepped into the canoe beside Chingachgook. In the darkness he could not see the evil smile that came over the face of March. He probably would have paid little heed if he had, for his mind at that moment was occupied by the thought that Judith had not come forward to wish him Godspeed. This hurt him far more than any menace March might represent.

If Leatherstocking's heart was sore, Judith's was equally wounded, but from a different cause. March's threat had made her frantic with fear for the safety of the man she loved. That death would loom through every moment of this stealthy advance on the Huron camp, she had not the slightest doubt. March's jealousy was already threatening. She could not

bring herself further to subject Leatherstocking to its consequences by bidding him good-by, for she knew she was not strong enough to let him go with only a word of farewell. She longed to feel herself clasped in his arms, to have his lips pressed against hers. But she dared not. His safety meant too much to her. She buried her face in her hands and struggled to keep back the sobs that would betray her to March.

Leatherstocking's last good-by came softly across the gradually widening strip of water that separated the canoe and the ark. A paddle splashed gently, and then—silence.

Crouched on the deck, Judith stared with unseeing eyes into the darkness that now had become complete. The ark was moving slowly southward down Glimmerglass in the direction in which lay the Huron camp. Hutter had determined to bring up as near as possible to the point where he and March had landed on their ill-fated scalp-hunting expedition, for he felt that Leatherstocking and Chingachgook would choose that spot to beach their canoe. This maneuver at least would make the ark a possible factor in their escape, and Hutter was far from sanguine as to the outcome.

At length the ark reached its destination, as

nearly as Hutter could gauge his position in the darkness, and the sweeps were unshipped.

"A bit of rest wouldn't come amiss," he observed, stretching his arms above his head.

"Take it then, old man," exclaimed March with an attempt at cordiality. "I'll watch out on deck while you turn in for an hour. 'Twill do you good."

Hutter yawned a sleepy assent and disappeared in the cabin where Hetty was already in a troubled slumber.

Judith, every sense on the alert, was aware without looking up that March was approaching her. His moccasined feet made no sound on the deck as he stealthily drew nearer, and she shuddered instinctively with all the loathing of one who walks in darkness through a swamp known to be inhabited by poisonous snakes.

Suddenly he stopped and for a moment stood motionless. Judith shot a quick glance at him, but instead of finding his crafty eyes turned upon her, she saw that he was peering towards shore as if waiting for some signal.

The meaning of this strange attitude did not dawn upon her at once. Then like a flash she realized that he was waiting for the cry of

the loon that would announce Leatherstocking's arrival in the enemy's stronghold.

The hand that had been clenched at March's side now stole cautiously to the front of his tunic and the shining butt of one of Hutter's silver-mounted pistols was brought into view. Judith's heart froze with terror as the significance of this action came to her.

Mad with jealousy, March planned a fiendish revenge that would forever silence his rival. The cry of the loon would bring with it the death of Leatherstocking, for the moment it rang out upon the night, the report of the pistol would send the Hurons scouring through the brush in search of the cause of the alarm. Leatherstocking could not hope to escape.

An evil smile played about March's cruel lips. His hour of triumph was at hand.

Judith struggled to her feet, her eyes wide with terror.

"In God's name, Harry—not that!" she pleaded. "I'll marry you—I'll go with you where you wish—but spare him!"

"Very like," sneered March, looking down at her, the light of madness burning from between narrowed eyelids, "very like! You love him, do you? Enough to give yourself to me

to save him, eh? Well, mark ye, my fine lady, I want none of your favor at that price! You speak too late! His scalp hangs in a Huron lodge by sunrise, or my name's not Hurry Harry March!"

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE BETRAYAL

In silence Leatherstocking and Chingachgook drove the canoe towards shore, the former with a heart saddened at Judith's coldness. Both realized full well the dangers which lay head of them. The defeat of the Hurons that afternoon, the degradation of the chief in the presence of his people, the release of Hutter and March, all had served to whip into fury the racial hatred for the whites, and Rivenoak's blazing declaration of war to the death but proved that hope for a peaceful settlement of differences had vanished.

Leatherstocking knew the penalty of discovery. If either he or the Mohican fell into Huron hands that night, the scalping knife would surely be steeped in blood, but not before the most inhuman tortures conceivable in a savage mind had been inflicted. It was a gamble with death in its most horrible form, with the odds all against the two brave men who steadily paddled onward into the night.

The canoe grated on the beach, and the first stage of the journey was ended. With the utmost caution Leatherstocking and his companion lifted the craft from the water, carried it into the brush and made their rifles ready for instant use. In silence the Mohican pointed into the forest and started off, Leatherstocking close on his heels.

As they drew near the cliff they realized that the darkness was too intense to permit them to see any one who might be hiding there, friend or foe.

"Go up top—see camp there," whispered Chingachgook, and the two crept up the slope that flanked the cliff on the side nearest them.

Several minutes passed before they reached the top, for it was necessary for them to go slowly, to feel about for every resting place for hands and knees to avoid dislodging loose pebbles that in rolling down the hill would warn the Hurons of their presence. At last they crouched in the underbrush above the cliff and before them lay the Huron camp.

The fire was blazing high and the warriors were seated about it as if in council. Rivenoak stood before them. Beside him was Briarthorn, who clasped the wrist of Wah-ta-Wah as if to prevent her breaking away.

"What says the Delaware maid, now?" asked Rivenoak, turning from the assemblage and facing Wah-ta-Wah. "Will she become the squaw of Briarthorn?"

Wah-ta-Wah drew herself up proudly and glared her defiance at the chief.

"Briarthorn is a coward," she said contemptuously. "Briarthorn is a man without a tribe. His lies and treachery are as the leaves of the trees. The Delawares will not have him. Only the murdering Hurons stoop so low. Wah-ta-Wah will die before she will go to his lodge!"

Rivenoak's fury could no longer be restrained.

"Delaware maid, you go to Briarthorn's lodge this night!" he roared. "I have spoken."

With a laugh of triumph Briarthorn seized the girl and, throwing her lightly over his shoulder, he ran from the circle of grinning Hurons.

Chingachgook clutched Leatherstocking's arm and pointed. Briarthorn's path lay directly in front of the bushes behind which the two were concealed.

"Now!" gasped Leatherstocking.

The Mohican reached out his arms. His fingers closed on Briarthorn's throat and the Del-

aware, with his captive, was pulled through the screen of bushes.

Luckily, the Hurons had more weighty matters to consider than the fate of an unwilling bride. No sooner had Briarthorn left the circle than they dismissed him from their thoughts and turned their attention to Rivenoak's appeal for another attack on the Castle. Thus engaged, they had not witnessed the Delaware's sudden disappearance.

Chingachgook grasped the struggling Wah-ta-Wah in his arms while Leatherstocking bore Briarthorn to the ground. The Mohican, unfortunately forgetting caution in his desire to notify his white companions of the success of the venture, raised his cupped hand to his lips and the cry of the loon rang out through the night. Instantly he was gone down the steep path, with his lovely burden over his shoulder.

Leatherstocking held the Delaware still for a second and looked up. From the lake came the sharp crack of a gun, and he knew his doom was sealed.

Quickly releasing his hold on the unconscious Briarthorn, he started down the hill, but he was too late. Suddenly the brush was alive with Hurons warned by the shot of impending

evil, and he found himself surrounded. Wild cries tore at his ears as the savages spied him. The fight he made was all that human strength could offer, but the odds were too great. He was hurled to the ground under the rush of warriors—a prisoner at the mercy of Rivenoak.

The shot that delivered Leatherstocking into Huron hands irrevocably allied Hurry Harry March with the foes of his race, and Judith, staring at him in unbelieving horror, dumbly watched his hand lower the pistol. In her eyes it was the hand of a murderer, and she shrank from him as he faced her with an air of bravado that his trembling lips belied. Judith staggered to the cabin and grasped at it uncertainly for support. March's shot might as well have found its mark in her heart, for she was as one who had received a death blow.

"What's amiss?" demanded Hutter, stumbling to the deck and staring wildly about him in an effort to rouse his faculties from the heavy sleep from which the shot had awakened him. "I heerd a shot. Is it the Injins?"

Judith braced herself against the cabin and pointed an accusing finger at March, who, in his confusion, was struggling to conceal the

pistol in his tunic. Hetty, who had followed her father, threw an arm protectingly about her sister.

"Ask him!" Judith replied in a voice that broke despite her effort to control it.

March put up a bold front as he faced Tom Hutter, but the false note rang so clearly that his words brought only frank if unspoken disbelief.

"I fired the shot," he admitted hoarsely. "I thought I saw a raft of Mingos off there."

He pointed vaguely into the darkness and his eyes fell under Judith's glance.

"He lies, father," she exclaimed; "the truth is not in him. He fired to warn the Hurons that Leatherstocking was in their camp!"

"Judith, gal, what are you sayin'!"

"It's true," she declared. "Harry March hated Leatherstocking because I—I loved him. He waited until he heard the loon cry—you remember, that was to be the signal—then he fired. Oh, the monster!"

Unable longer to bear up under the weight of her grief, Judith sank into her father's arms, incoherently sobbing out her story of March's treachery.

"What's the meanin' of this?" Hutter demanded fiercely. "Speak, man!"

March shifted uneasily. His eyes avoided those of his questioner as he mumbled:

"Jude's mistaken. 'Twas as I told you. I thought the Mingos was comin'."

A splashing in the water in front of the ark caused him to start in fright. The canoe bearing Chingachgook and Wah-ta-Wah slid rapidly into view, and, holding the painter in one hand, the Mohican leaped to the deck.

"Who fire shot?" he demanded, his fierce eyes searching the faces of Hutter and March as he unsheathed his hunting knife.

March drew back in abject terror, for there was no mistaking Chingachgook's determination to have a satisfactory explanation.

"Harry March—" began Judith, but her father clasped his hand over her mouth, for he knew that March's life would not be worth a puff if the Mohican learned the truth.

" 'Twas a mistake, Mohican," he said, speaking rapidly, "and no one's to blame. Tall Pine fired the shot thinkin' he saw a raftful of Mingo warriors about to attack."

Chingachgook listened in silence. His disbelief was obvious, and March, trembling with fear at the sight of the gleaming knife, cringed against the cabin. The Mohican turned to Hetty.

"Pale Lily love Great Manitou," he said grimly. "No tell lie. Pale Lily say Tall Pine make mistake?"

Hetty tried to speak, but the words would not come. She knew her sister had spoken the truth. March's terror was evidence of it. She did love the Great Manitou, and she would not lie. Strange to say, it was this that saved Hurry Harry from the Mohican's knife.

The turning of the question to her sister roused Judith as nothing else could have done. She understood Hetty's quandary and she realized, too, that the truth would bring with it another death. She could not in cold blood send a white man—even one so low as March—to his fate.

"Pale Lily tired," she said quickly, stepping between Hetty and the Mohican. "I will answer for her. Tall Pine made a mistake. He thought he saw Huron warriors."

Hetty pressed her sister's hand in gratitude, and Chingachgook, accepting the explanation as truth, turned away.

"Tall Pine—big fool," he muttered. "Come sunrise Leatherstocking be dead."

He made the canoe fast to an iron bolt and helped Wah-ta-Wah to the deck of the ark.

"She be Wah-ta-Wah," he said by way of introduction.

Hetty caught the Indian girl's hands in hers.

"I'm glad you're free," she exclaimed. "You tried to help me, and I'm so thankful to you."

Wah-ta-Wah smiled with pleasure at Hetty's sincere greeting.

"Wah-ta-Wah glad you no be Huron squaw," she replied.

Hetty led her into the cabin, where they were joined by Judith, who had somewhat regained her composure.

"Tell me," she urged, "did you see Leatherstocking?"

"No see but Chingachgook," answered Wah-ta-Wah, and then she proceeded to tell what she knew of her rescue. This was very little. She had been thrown over the shoulder of Briarthorn and the next thing she knew Chingachgook was running with her through the forest to the lake. So rapidly had the Mohican run that they were already nearing the shore when the sound of the pistol shot was heard.

"But Leatherstocking," persisted Judith, "can nothing be done to save him? There must be a way—I am sure there must be!"

Wah-ta-Wah was silent for a moment, then she said softly, with an attempt at reassurance:

"No can help now. Wait for sun. Maybe then."

"But by sunrise he may be dead!" cried Judith. "We can't wait!"

"Judith, dear, please do not torture yourself with such thoughts," entreated Hetty, gently placing her arms about her sister. "Leatherstocking is brave and clever. More than all that, he loves God. God will not let one of His children suffer. He will show us the way in which we can help, but we must ask His guidance. We must pray for His help."

Hetty sank to her knees on the floor of the cabin, her lips moving in prayer, and Judith knelt beside her.

Gone was the Judith Hutter whose "folly" had so cruelly been voiced by Harry March. In her place was the Judith of Leatherstocking's heart, and the difference between the two was as marked as the difference between night and day.

Wah-ta-Wah looked on in awe. The words she heard were for the greater part meaningless to her, but instinctively she felt that she

was at that moment standing in the presence of the Great Spirit who watched alike over paleface and Indian. Silently she stole out on deck, where she crouched near the door to guard against intrusion upon this sacred council.

From the moment Judith had so bravely lied to prevent her sister from telling the truth that would have meant his death at the hands of Chingachgook, Harry March resumed his wonted boastfulness. He felt that he had been exonerated in the eyes of his companions for complicity in the capture of Leatherstocking and now he showed no sign of the fear that gripped him when the Mohican's hunting knife had gleamed its menace.

"Thar's little to be gained by waitin', Tom," he said as he sat cross-legged on the deck, cleaning the barrel of his rifle. "Leatherstocking's a prisoner; that can't be changed. The Mingos is arter our scalps. That can be changed. Cut loose from the ark, I say, and take to the canoes. It's only two days by river to the settlemints."

Hutter made no reply, but Chingachgook could not let this heartless suggestion pass unchallenged.

"Tall Pine be friend to Leatherstocking," he said scornfully. "Chingachgook happy Tall Pine not friend of his."

"What mean ye by that, Mohican?" demanded March angrily.

"Leatherstocking save Tall Pine and Muskrat from Hurons," went on the Mohican unmoved. "Tall Pine shoot pistol and warn Hurons Leatherstocking in camp. Leatherstocking prisoner. Soon go to Great Manitou. Tall Pine say run away. Tall Pine be coward like fox."

"Hold fast, Mohican," interrupted Hutter, anxious to placate the Indian for fear of further bloodshed. "You're right and Harry's right, but you're both partly wrong. Three of us can't save Leatherstocking now; the Mingos is sot on havin' his scalp. 'Tis our duty to save ourselves as best we may."

"Tall Pine be coward," continued the Mohican, ignoring Hutter's words. "Tall Pine liar. Tall Pine no make mistake when fire pistol."

March started in guilty fear. All his bravado left him, and what remained was but the hulk of a man afraid. Fiercely the eyes of Chingachgook burned into his and he knew that Judith's ruse had failed. Unsteadily he rose to

his feet and sought the other end of the ark. Hutter watched the departing figure with a mingling of disgust and anger.

"No fear, Mohican," he said. "Tom Hutter won't leave a friend like Leatherstocking in the hands of them red devils if he can help it."

"Muskrat be brave man," answered Chingachgook. "Muskrat have daughters. Must save them first. Chingachgook stay for help Leatherstocking."

"I've protected them gals afore and I can do it ag'in," exclaimed Hutter. "You and me together will save him, if he can be saved."

The night was waning when quiet finally reigned on the ark. Judith and Hetty and Wah-tah-Wah sought what rest they might in the cabin. Hutter dozed fitfully at his post by the door, striving unsuccessfully to keep both eyes open for a possible renewal of hostilities between the Mohican and March.

Chingachgook, however, made no sign that might be construed as threatening. He sat, motionless as a statue, gazing steadily towards shore.

As for Hurry Harry March, he kept lonely vigil at the stern. With his rifle cocked across his knees, he watched the Mohican with an intensity that made his eyes smart. He knew

that he was indeed in peril, and the fact that his treacherous heart admitted its treachery served but to intensify the terror that held him in its grip. Harry March was waiting for the death he felt certain would be meted out to him by the Mohican, and the night was a horror that seemed never to end.

## CHAPTER XV

### IN HURON HANDS

Taken wholly unawares by the unexpected shot from the lake, Leatherstocking had had little opportunity to follow Chingachgook before the Hurons were crashing through the underbrush all about him in frantic search for the cause of the alarm. Leatherstocking dropped the unconscious body of Briarthorn and picked up his rifle, but a tomahawk struck his arm a glancing blow, paralyzing it for the moment.

With his good arm he swung the rifle like a club and backed cautiously in the direction of the slope. Three Hurons sprang at him. The whirling rifle butt crushed the jaw of one, and he fell writhing in agony as the blood gushed from his mouth, but in a flash the other two closed in. They tore the rifle from Leatherstocking's hand and bore him to the ground.

Instantly the entire war party rushed down upon them, and Leatherstocking knew that further resistance would be worse than useless. To avoid a possible knife thrust, he quit strug-

gling and lay still. He offered no resistance when they bound his arms to his sides, and he made no effort to rise to his feet until a prod from a tomahawk informed him that this move was desired.

Despite the fact that he was so tightly bound that he could move only his legs, two Hurons kept a tight hold on him as they forced him through the underbrush and into the clearing. Their experience with him had been such as to give them an exaggerated idea of his strength, and they would not have been at all surprised if he burst his bonds and renewed the fight. Consequently the party pressed closely about him and did not leave him to himself until he had been made fast to the sapling to which Hutter had so recently been tied. This accomplished, the warriors withdrew and in ominous silence resumed their places about the camp fire from which Rivenoak had not stirred since the shot had so abruptly ended the council.

The buckskin thongs, now fast about Leatherstocking's legs as well as his arms, made movement of any kind next to impossible. Carefully, so as not to attract the attention of his captors, he strained at his bonds, throwing all the force of his powerful muscles into the ef-

fort. Not a fraction of an inch did they give. Instead, they seemed to fasten on him the tighter and his body was filled with sharp tingling pains as they bit viciously into his flesh, all but stopping the blood flow. Escape by this means, then, was not to be thought of. He was only wearing down his strength to no purpose, and he would need it sorely before many hours passed.

Leatherstocking resigned himself to the inevitable and for the first time his mind dwelt upon the shot and its meaning. He had been explicit in his instructions to Hutter to see to it that not the slightest noise be made on the ark, especially after the cry of the loon had sounded. As a matter of fact, the cry itself had been needless. When he and Chingachgook set out on their dangerous mission, he had not foreseen the possibility that the captive Wah-ta-Wah would be so easily found or that her deliverance from the hands of the Hurons would be possible so soon.

Although he would not admit it, he had suggested the signal as a means of letting Judith know of his safe arrival. He hoped she would want to know. Now he cursed the sentiment that had prompted his gross carelessness—a carelessness that no true woodsman could be

guilty of. He, Leatherstocking, whose prowess on the hunting trail had made him famous throughout the Delaware nation, had fallen victim to his own infatuation for a woman!

And what was this woman? Harry March had described her in questionable terms. For his own part, Leatherstocking had not been able to accept March's words as strict truth, nor had he succeeded in freeing his mind from the impression they had originally made. At the risk of doubting the man he had considered his friend, he had finally compromised by taking Judith on faith. Once this decision had been arrived at, he had found it far more difficult to ignore her beauty and charm. This had been the beginning of the infatuation that had led him into the peril in which he now found himself.

Leatherstocking flushed angrily and tears came into his eyes as he realized his own impotence. Tamenund trusted him and even then believed that his faithful Killer-of-the-deer was deep in the forest, warning the tribes against war with the whites. The trusted messenger had proved himself utterly unworthy. He had tarried at Glimmerglass, lured by a pretty face and a pair of taunting eyes until long past the hour when his mission might have been

crowned with success. The Hurons were already on the warpath and he was their prisoner, betrayed into their hands by a mysterious shot.

Who fired the shot? This question loomed in his mind like a dark cloud that suddenly blots out the daylight. Who on the ark hated him so blackly as to bring him to the horrible death the Hurons would visit upon him?

Neither Hutter nor March were novices with firearms. Therefore, he dismissed the theory of an accidental shot. It was also beyond the range of possibility to suppose that a sudden attack on the ark had been responsible, for in that event many shots would have been fired. This line of reasoning led directly back to his original assumption that the shot had been deliberate and intentional. Was March the guilty one? Leatherstocking fought against this belief, but, regardless of his loyalty to his friend, there still remained the fact that within the last few hours March had exhibited unmistakable signs of hate towards him, obviously caused by jealousy at Judith's interest in him.

This thought hurt more than anything else in the whole sorry business. Hurry Harry March, his comrade on many a hunting trail, to have betrayed him into the hands of the

Hurons—it was unbelievable, and yet no other explanation seemed possible. With a groan of despair, he closed his eyes as if to blot out the vision of the woman he held responsible for all this evil.

Standing thus, his body held painfully upright by the thongs which bound him, Leatherstocking dozed. The warriors had long since deserted the now dying camp fire, leaving only two of their number to watch him, and these two curled themselves up close to the glowing embers and slept. Far off in the woods the eerie hoot of an owl sounded and the prisoner stirred slightly, only to sink a moment later into deeper slumber—the slumber of a man utterly worn out from great physical exertion.

How long he slept, Leatherstocking did not know, but when he awoke gray daylight had broken and the Hurons had already begun the work of a new day. With studied indifference they passed and repassed him as they went about their various activities. Apparently there was a purpose in this lack of interest in their prisoner, and he wondered what it meant. He was not to remain long in doubt, however.

Suddenly three squaws approached him and

the warriors stood back, forming a path down which they passed. They walked slowly and with a peculiar rhythm that appeared to mark the time of a doleful wailing chant with which they accompanied their steps. Two of the women stopped a few feet from the sapling, but the third came on until she stood face to face with Leatherstocking. She was a comely squaw of perhaps forty, but the vehemence of her chant, now risen to a shriek, distorted her features and she raised her hands wildly towards the sky.

"Skulking Yengee!" she cried, her fingers clawing at his face. "Coward—seeker of scalps of women and children—you have slain the Lynx! You have struck him down as the snake strikes down its victim! May the knives of the Hurons soon be bathed in the blood of the paleface jackal of the forest!"

Leatherstocking had more than a smattering of the Huron tongue, and although he did not catch every word the general meaning was plain to him. The woman was shrieking out her grief at the death of the Lynx and calling down the vengeance of the tribe on the head of his slayer. This was clear to him. It was also evident that she would be the first to strike

a retaliatory blow, for her frenzy was growing and the long, powerful fingers were coming closer to his eyes with every wild gesture.

"The Lynx is gone," she screamed, her face demoniacal in its fury. "The Sumach is left to mourn alone! Woe to the Yengees!"

Again the fingers clawed at his face, and this time his cheek was torn from ear to mouth by the sharp nails. The sight of blood drove the woman frantic and she leaped at the helpless Leatherstocking, the light of madness gleaming in her eyes.

This madness seemed to be communicating itself to the circle of warriors who had gathered about to watch, for now they raised their voices in wild cries of encouragement as the Sumach prepared to renew her attack on Leatherstocking.

Suddenly a commanding voice rang out. The warriors' cries ceased and their ranks broke as Rivenoak strode towards the prisoner, wielding his tomahawk with no gentle arm to impress the savages with his displeasure. He grasped the Sumach by one arm and hurled her to the ground.

"Back to your lodge," he cried. "This is no place for a woman."

Then he turned to his warriors and waved

A PRISONER AT THE MERCY OF RIVENOAK.

them back as though they were children who had been discovered at some mischievous prank. Like reprimanded children they scattered. Rivenoak faced Leatherstocking with a bland smile.

"Paleface friend welcome," he said in his halting English. "Hurons mean no harm. Sumach, squaw of Lynx, sad for death of Lynx."

"So it appeared," replied Leatherstocking quietly.

"Paleface kill Lynx, now prisoner of Huron," went on Rivenoak meaningly.

"Paleface not afeered of Mingo," snapped Leatherstocking, defiantly. "Lynx big coward. Try to shoot me in back. I fired first."

Rivenoak pondered, then shook his head.

"Hurons not believe," he said. "Think you tell lie. Hurons say must have scalp."

"Looks like they wouldn't have much trouble gettin' it," replied Leatherstocking, glancing down at his bonds, "but mark ye, Mingo: the liftin' of my scalp will be a bad day's work for your murderin' Injins. The French may pay ye high for it but sartain it is that the English will make ye pay far higher for the privilege of offerin' it for sale."

Rivenoak glared angrily at the captive who dared threaten him even in the face of death.

Then the anger died and he looked at Leatherstocking with something in his eyes akin to unwilling admiration.

"You Leatherstocking?" he asked.

A nod of the head was his answer.

"Leatherstocking kill Lynx, Briarthorn say so," the chief went on. "Leatherstocking take spirit face and robe from Se-tah-ga, great Medicine Man. Leatherstocking escape when whole Huron tribe pursue. Leatherstocking defeat many Huron warriors. Leatherstocking capture Rivenoak."

The captive smiled curiously at this enumeration of his exploits, none of which reflected much credit on his foes, and awaited the conclusion.

"Leatherstocking be brave warrior," Rivenoak declared.

This statement caused Leatherstocking to look up keenly alert, for flattery from Huron lips could be nothing more than a cloak for some hidden and more sinister meaning.

"Rivenoak proud to be friend of Leatherstocking," the wily Huron went on. "No can take scalp. Leatherstocking go free. Go back to big lodge in lake. Tell Muskrat Rivenoak be friend."

"Well, go on. What deviltry comes next?"

Mistaking the interruption for acquiescence in his plans, Rivenoak quickly came to the point he was making.

"When Leatherstocking make talk with Muskrat, Hurons come on rafts. Attack big lodge. Leatherstocking, Wild Flower and Pale Lily go free. Rivenoak take scalp of Muskrat and Tall Pine and Mohican chief."

The cruel eyes glittered and the painted face took on an expression of fiendish joy at the terrible picture his words conjured up before him.

For a moment Leatherstocking was appalled at this monstrous suggestion, then his wrath blazed.

"You red devil," he cried in fury, "cut my bonds and I'll tear your cowardly heart out o' your carcass! Only Mingo jackals betray their friends! You can lift my scalp, you thievin' murderer, but your day is comin' and comin' fast. 'Tis a short trail you're treadin' and at the end of it the King's soldiers have a noose waitin' for your neck!"

Rivenoak had not looked for this. To offer a captive freedom on any terms and to be defied thus scathingly was a new experience to him. In his savage code, such bravery in the face of death set a man apart from his fellows

and, despite his wounded dignity, he could not but admire the courageous spirit of the white warrior who now strained at his bonds in an evident effort to carry the feud to the point of a physical encounter. He stepped back and folded his arms, reassuming the dignity he had dropped in his attempt to enlist Leatherstocking's aid in his bloody plan.

"Leatherstocking be brave warrior," he said calmly. "Leatherstocking choose torture—not go free. Too bad. Rivenoak take Wild Flower for squaw, take scalp of Muskrat and Tall Pine and Mohican. Pale Lily be left for Great Manitou. Leatherstocking he die by fire. Rivenoak has spoken."

Then the Huron chief did a strange thing—a thing that spoke more strongly of his admiration for his captive's courage than words could have done. Raising his hand he summoned two warriors to his side.

"Cut his bonds," he commanded them in the tribal tongue. "Let him go where he will in the camp, but watch him closely that he make no attempt to escape."

The warriors did as they were bid, and Leatherstocking felt the buckskin thongs fall from about him. So long had he stood in the one position and so tightly had the bonds held

him that his benumbed limbs refused to support him. He attempted to take a step forward, but crumpled up as if a bullet had pierced him and pitched forward on the ground. For a moment he lay thus, every muscle in his body tingling with pain. Then he struggled to a sitting posture and braced his back against the sapling.

Thus he sat for some time, again ignored by his captors save for a Huron girl who brought him food and water. Gradually his strength returned and he pulled himself to his feet. The rest and the return of normal blood circulation restored to him his old-time strength and soon no evidences of his painful experience remained, save the marks of the thongs on his wrists and arms.

The sun was now well on its way up the eastern sky and its warm glow stirred to action all the wild life of the forest. Half a dozen warriors set out on a hunting expedition to replenish the food stores of the camp. Those who remained engaged themselves in far more sinister activities. Scalping knives were scraped on smooth stones until the keenness of the blades satisfied their owners. Bows were restrung, arrow heads inspected and the few rifles the tribe boasted were given such

care as suggested itself to riflemen as yet generally unskilled in the use of firearms.

These were warlike preparations, and Leatherstocking watched them with growing concern. His own fate had become a matter of indifference to him. He knew escape was practically an impossibility, for his two guards kept their eyes steadily upon him. The fire and the scalping knife had already been decreed by Rivenoak, so there was nothing to look forward to so far as he was concerned but death.

What would be the fate of his friend on the ark? This too had been foreordained. Rivenoak would stop at nothing now to gain his end. Three scalps and Judith were the prizes the cruel Huron was striving for—three scalps aside from his own.

Leatherstocking groaned in spite of himself. If only his life might at least buy safety for Judith. Hetty, he knew, would not be harmed —but Judith, the squaw of the hated Rivenoak! The brave heart quailed at the thought and an agony of fear that could not have been aroused by the terrible fate awaiting him brought a sob of despair.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE SHOT FROM THE ARK

Three tall pines standing like sentinels on the shore of Glimmerglass looked down with stately tolerance on the petty flurries that agitated the men and women, both red-skinned and white, who were striving and planning, each for the overthrow of the other. Half a mile out on the shimmering waters the ark rested in the silence of early morning, its inhabitants but awaiting the next move of the enemy. A quarter mile inland the Huron camp was a veritable hive of activity, the warriors preparing themselves for the renewal of hostilities that hung on a word from their chief. A gentle breeze swayed the branches of the woodland sentinels on this boundary line between land and water, and they sighed softly as though in sorrow at the futility of it all.

But even in the moments when tragedy presses closest, men and women will love. The eternal call that always brings a response sounds as clear above the din of battle as it does when peace holds sway and on this sunny

morning in early September, literally between the battle lines of white and red, a man and a maid forgot the world in their pledges of undying devotion. Behind them towered the pine trees and a screen of thick underbrush concealed them from prying eyes. Before them lay Glimmerglass in an ominous quiet that precedes the storm.

Black Eagle, son of Rivenoak, but not yet a full-fledged warrior, was weary of the constant bloodshed and, much to his father's disgust, found greater joy in the eyes of Dove Wing than in the promise of unnumbered scalps. Dove Wing, for her part, had no thought save for Black Eagle and so the understanding was complete. While the warriors were busying themselves with the tools of their profession, the Huron maid and the son of the Huron chief had stolen away to this forest retreat to claim a few moments of happiness.

In silence they sat, hand in hand, gazing out across the lake towards the ark. The soft brown eyes of Dove Wing sought for a moment those of Black Eagle and her glance of love was returned by the young chieftain. Words would have been futile. They could have conveyed no deeper meaning.

"Look!" cried Dove Wing suddenly, and she

pointed to a canoe that was now being paddled from the ark towards the overhanging willows at their feet.

The eyes of Black Eagle grew keen as he looked in the direction the girl was pointing, and then they hardened as he saw that the canoe contained Judith and Hetty—the Wild Flower and the Pale Lily. Instinctively he grasped his bow, for in his heart, deeply planted, was the Huron's hatred for the Yengees.

The canoe was approaching rapidly, the girls swinging their paddles with the skill born of long practice and Black Eagle fitted the notch of an arrow shaft to the string of his bow. Kneeling, he took careful aim at Judith, but a small hand rested on his.

"Do not kill the white woman," she said with an appeal in her eyes which he could not resist. "She loves the captive even as Dove Wing loves Black Eagle and but comes to bid him farewell. She can do no harm."

Black Eagle lowered his bow.

"It is well," he said, clasping the girl's soft hands. "She can do no harm. Soon enough her heart will cry out in grief. The Yengee captive goes to his death to-day. My father, Rivenoak, has spoken."

A look of pain came into Dove Wing's face and she turned away.

"Such hatred and bloodshed cannot be pleasing to the Great Manitou," she said sadly. "His people should live at peace with the Yengees."

"The Yengees are treacherous and the truth is not in them," declared Black Eagle. "They would sell our scalps for gold. They steal our hunting grounds."

"Do Huron warriors not sell enemy scalps to the Great White Chief of the French?" she asked.

"Thoughts of war are not for Dove Wing," he parried, smiling into her questioning eyes.

And it was truth that he spoke. His moments of liberty from the duties of a young warrior were too few to be spent in idle discussion of the rights and wrongs of his tribe's feud with the white settlers of Glimmerglass. In a moment both the Indian youth and the maid had put from their minds all save their love, and the approaching canoe was forgotten.

Paddling close inshore where the willows screened the bank, Judith caught a low-hanging branch and held the canoe steady while Hetty climbed out.

"Here under these leaves you will be safe, sister," she said. "Keep well hidden. Soon I will return with Leatherstocking, for I know the Hurons will hear God's word."

"Oh, Hetty, Hetty—I'll be praying that you succeed," whispered Judith, her eyes filled with tears and her face drawn with anguish. "You're so brave!"

"Not brave, dear," replied Hetty, simply, "just content to trust in God and give myself into His hands. He never fails those who believe."

Bending forward, she grasped Judith's hand and raised it to her lips. In another moment she was creeping through the bushes towards the Huron camp. All unaware of this little drama, an Indian youth and maid pledged their love scarce a stone's throw away, and the menace that brooded over them drew closer.

Huron cunning and Huron treachery as exemplified in all of Rivenoak's actions thus far gave Leatherstocking no sense of freedom, although his bonds had been removed. The savages apparently paid no attention to him, even the two who had been told off as guards, but despite this he had the feeling that they were but biding their time, waiting for him to make a break for liberty as an excuse for hastening

the torture that Rivenoak had unaccountably postponed.

The inaction, though, was worse than the possibility of an attack, so Leatherstocking resolved to see just how far he might depend upon his luck. With the utmost unconcern he rose to his feet and stretched lazily. Not an eye was turned upon him. He ventured a few steps forward, then turned and walked towards the camp fire. In so doing, he passed one of his guards. The Indian glanced at him casually and then resumed the work of fixing a new string to his bow.

This was encouraging. The Hurons were evidently so sure of their captive that they ignored the possibility of an attempted escape, which even at that moment was flashing through his mind. But a sudden break for liberty would be foolhardy. Before he had reached the first line of trees across the clearing, a Huron arrow or tomahawk or bullet would have found its mark. No, the thing was not to be undertaken on impulse. It must be more carefully planned.

Leatherstocking sat down on the rotting stump of a tree and looked about him. An expression of bewilderment crossed his face and he stood up in utter amazement as he

saw Hetty Hutter emerge from the forest. For a moment she stood still, then spying him, she ran forward, paying no attention whatever to the savages who leaped to their feet and drew back from her as she passed.

Straight up to the astonished Leatherstocking she ran and caught his big right hand in her two small ones.

"Oh, Leatherstocking," she exclaimed, a pleased smile on her delicate lips, "I knew you would be safe! Judith feared so that you wouldn't, but I was sure I would be in time."

"Why, Hetty," he gasped, "what brings you here among these red devils agin?"

"I've come to take you back to the ark," she replied. "Judith thought perhaps the Hurons would accept more ivory images in exchange for you, but I felt that Rivenoak could be made to see that holding you would displease God, so I've come to talk to him. Judith is waiting in the canoe by the willows."

"What say ye, girl?" he exclaimed, excitedly. "Judith came with ye?"

"Yes, she is waiting for us now by the willows."

"Judith is in grave danger," he went on, grasping her wrist. "If she's taken by the Mingos now, death would be a blessing."

Hetty stared at him as though she did not understand. Leatherstocking looked quickly about. The Hurons had resumed their tasks and for the moment their attention seemed centered elsewhere. Without a word, he swung Hetty to his shoulder and leaped across the clearing and into the forest. Unmindful of his burden and trusting entirely to luck to guide his flying feet away from rocks and tangled vines, he sped down the hill. Behind came the cries of the Hurons, now in hot pursuit.

The very daring of this sudden break for liberty proved to be its salvation. Taken totally unawares, the Indians had tarried in confusion just long enough to give Leatherstocking a slight lead. The thick forest, although it cut down his speed, served as a protection against arrows and bullets, for even the most skilled marksman could not have taken telling aim at a target that dodged from tree to tree as the fugitive did.

On and on he ran, and Hetty clung to him, supported by his powerful arms. At last the lake was just ahead. A few steps more and Leatherstocking saw the willows and Judith bravely holding the canoe against the shore. He saw more. Not fifty yards distant was the ark, with Tom Hutter and Chingachgook pull-

ing frantically on the sweeps. On the bow knelt Hurry Harry March, his rifle raised and ready to fire at the first sign of a Huron.

One last leap, and the exhausted Leatherstocking reached the canoe, but his margin of safety was pathetically small. From behind him the savages crashed through the underbrush. He dropped his burden into the canoe and with all his waning strength pushed the craft out into the open water towards the approaching ark. As he did so, the Hurons hurled themselves at him, forcing him to the ground exhausted and again a prisoner.

From his retreat among the pines, Black Eagle looked down at this brief struggle, then bidding Dove Wing await him, he slid down the steep incline to the beach where he joined his tribesmen. Dove Wing ran to the edge of the clearing, where she could get an unobstructed view of the warriors below, and Harry March on the deck of the ark took careful aim. His finger pressed the trigger and a puff of smoke belched from the barrel as the sharp crack of the rifle rang out.

Dove Wing clutched at her breast and a look of wonder came into her eyes. She took an uncertain step forward and then sank to the ground with a pitiful moan.

From the beach Black Eagle had witnessed March's inhuman act. He had seen the rifle seek out a target far to the right of the group of warriors that surrounded Leatherstocking and instinctively he had known that his beloved Dove Wing was to be the innocent victim of this Yengee devil's hate. Dumb with horror, he had heard the shot and seen the girl crumple up on the ground. For a second he stood still while the enraged Hurons shrieked for vengeance, and then he fled to the side of the dying Dove Wing.

Her eyes were open and her face was peaceful, but from her breast her life was ebbing fast. In silent grief Black Eagle knelt and gently took her in his arms.

"Black Eagle will be chief some day," she murmured, looking up at him. "It would please the Great Manitou if he made peace with the Yengees. Night is coming now, but Dove Wing fears not the darkness, my beloved—peace with the Yengees—peace—"

The eyelids fluttered and closed—the head dropped limply on Black Eagle's shoulder—and the gentle heart of an Indian maid was stilled forever.

In stoical silence the Huron warriors watched

the hand of tragedy close about her. They drew back as Black Eagle bowed his head in unspoken grief over the pitiful little body that he still clasped to his breast. This was Yengee treachery of the blackest—the handiwork of those whose lying tongues spoke the words of their God and whose weapons were turned against children.

Black Eagle reverently lowered the body to the ground, and then raising his clenched hands to Heaven, he called down the vengeance of his people upon the murderers of his beloved. There on his knees in the presence of death, he swore by all he held sacred that a swift and awful retribution should be visited upon the perpetrators of this outrage.

In the personal charge of Rivenoak, the captive Leatherstocking had been led to the pine and he witnessed the death of Dove Wing, sick at heart at the needless sacrifice. As Black Eagle rose from the ground, Rivenoak turned to his prisoner.

"Muskrat no friend of Leatherstocking," he said, his eyes gleaming cruelly. "Muskrat kill little maiden when Leatherstocking captive of Huron."

Rivenoak's meaning was clear. The ven-

geance of the tribe was to be visited upon the prisoner. Leatherstocking returned the glance, his own eyes filled with tears.

"Mingo," he said earnestly, his voice shaking with emotion, "I am the foe of your people, but if I ever git free I'll avenge that killin' as sartain as the sun rises to-morrow. 'Twasn't the Muskrat that done it. I saw the shot fired and so did you. 'Twas Tall Pine that killed her, and Tall Pine must answer for it."

Rivenoak stared in surprise at this unexpected reply. Keenly he appraised the young man.

"Leatherstocking be brave warrior," he muttered as if voicing a thought he would rather have kept to himself.

Now came the squaws, summoned by a messenger who had been sent back to the camp for the purpose. Their wailing and moaning filled the air as they lifted the body of the Indian girl and carried it slowly from the piney retreat that never again would shelter Black Eagle and his loved one. Behind them, alone, walked the young chieftain, his head high and his step firm but the chilling hand of grief clutching his heart. Rivenoak and his prisoner followed at some distance and then came the

warriors, voicing a weird chant of requiem.

The fury of the Hurons at this ruthless slaying of a woman now turned itself upon Leatherstocking. Briarthorn, hoping to take advantage of the tragedy, was loud in his denunciation of the prisoner.

"See now what Yengee treachery can do," he exclaimed to Rivenoak. "Leatherstocking, the white Delaware, would kill all our women if he were free. He hates the Hurons. He must die in payment for the death of Dove Wing. Let the torture bring from him cries for mercy! Let the fire scorch his body! Tear his heart from his breast and throw it to the beasts of the forest! His scalp must hang at a Huron belt before the sun sets!"

Tied firmly to the sapling, Leatherstocking was instantly the center of a score of infuriated savages. Their tomahawks and scalping knives were waved wildly in the air as they began to circle about him in the dance of death. He closed his eyes, for he felt the end was at hand.

"Death to the Yengee!" shrieked the Hurons. "Death to the slayer of women!"

Briarthorn, having worked himself into a frenzy through his own impassioned exhortation, leaped at Leatherstocking, a tomahawk

poised in his hand. He let it fly with a terrific shriek, and it split the sapling above the prisoner's head.

The Hurons yelled their approval in tones that echoed and reëchoed through the forest. Wilder and wilder the dance became, and knives were brandished terribly close to the face of Leatherstocking. Knowing the savage's admiration for bravery, he forced a smile to his lips. Unflinchingly he faced the weapons whirled about his head.

"Dance, ye red devils!" he cried in defiance. "'Tis few more chances ye'll have!"

His words seemed to cheer him. Time and again his voice rose above the cries of the frantic savages, and every leer from an Indian face but strengthened the devil-may-care expression on his own. His eyes flashed as fiercely as though his hands were free to rend and tear his foes, and the set of his jaw told more plainly than words of his determination to go to his death unflinchingly.

For a few moments Rivenoak looked on in moody silence at the vain efforts of his warriors to strike fear to the heart of the captive. Then he ordered them to stop. He strode up to Leatherstocking and stood glaring at him.

"Yengee no afraid of Huron warrior," he

grated. "Yengee be too brave for fear tomahawk. See how Yengee watch Hurons capture Wild Flower. Maybe he feel fear when Wild Flower be prisoner too."

Leatherstocking's heart grew cold within him as he realized the significance of Rivenoak's words. Before he could speak, he was freed from the sapling, and the Hurons were dragging him through the forest towards the lake shore.

## CHAPTER XVII

### TORTURE

Once clear of the shore, Judith swung her paddle frantically in an effort to put her sister out of reach of Huron hands. Leatherstocking's fate seemed sealed. The savages literally crushed him to the ground and Judith was thankful that her position prevented her from seeing the end. Grimly she looked straight ahead toward the ark, which was now rapidly nearing shore. Hetty lay as Leatherstocking had dropped her, apparently in a swoon. This would assure her safety from an arrow or a bullet, and Judith made no effort to rouse her. The fact that her own body provided an excellent mark meant nothing to her.

The ark came to a stop and a few paddle strokes brought the canoe alongside. Judith stepped aboard and made the canoe fast, then bending over, called Hetty to follow her. The younger girl lifted her head and stared about in fright.

"Have no fear, Hetty," said Judith. "We are safe—but hurry!"

"Where is Leatherstocking?" asked Hetty.

A sob was the only answer. Judith could not bear to tell her sister that such grave danger had been faced in vain.

"Stand aside, Jude!" came a gruff command, and Judith turned to see Hurry Harry March on one knee in front of the cabin, his rifle aimed towards shore.

Judith crouched low and the rifle cracked above her head. For a second her eyes rested on the figure of an Indian girl on top of a wooded knoll to the right of the group of savages. Then the figure crumpled up and vanished behind a clump of bushes.

"Harry!" screamed Judith, in horror. "You've killed a woman!"

Before March could reply, Wah-ta-Wah sprang at him from the cabin. In fury, her hands clawed at his face and tore the rifle from his grasp as he cringed before the unexpected attack.

"Coward!" she shrieked. "Yengee dog! Slayer of women!"

These words, in the Delaware tongue, brought instant response from Chingachgook. He was at the stern with Hutter, pulling on the sweeps, and the cabin obstructed his vision forward, but the cries of Wah-ta-Wah told the story.

To the forward deck he rushed in time to see March raise his fist as if to beat off the Indian girl. The Mohican brushed her lightly aside and stood menacingly before the towering figure of her would-be assailant.

"Tall Pine strike man, not woman!" he challenged.

March drew back. His teeth were bared in a snarl.

"Tall Pine kill Huron girl," cried Wah-ta-Wah.

Chingachgook flashed a quick glance ashore and saw the warriors running to the knoll, dragging the captive Leatherstocking with them.

"Why Tall Pine kill woman—plenty warriors to shoot," demanded the Mohican, moving nearer.

March looked about him uneasily.

" 'Twas an accident," he declared.

"Aye, an accident that's like to cost your friend his life," came angrily from Hutter, who, attracted by the angry voices, had left the stern.

The Mohican's eyes flashed and all the pent-up hate occasioned by the betraying shot of the night before blazed forth. With a cry like that of an infuriated animal he hurled

himself upon the giant and for a second the two stood locked in a crushing embrace. Despite March's great strength, he was gradually forced to his knees by the invincible Indian and with bulging eyes he saw a deadly scalping knife poised above his head.

So sudden had been the attack that none of those who witnessed it had had time to interfere. The flash of the Mohican's blade brought a gasp of horror from Judith and she covered her eyes with her hands, but Hutter shouted a warning.

"Stop!" he ordered. "Stop or I'll shoot!"

The muzzle of his rifle moved menacingly from side to side, covering the two combatants and Chingachgook's weapon was stayed.

"Onhand him!" Hutter commanded.

With a look of utter amazement, the Indian did as he was bid and March rose shakily to his feet.

"We've had bloodshed enough," Hutter roared. "Must ye resk our lives still further?"

He looked from one to the other, and they read deep determination in his eyes.

"I've two gals to protect," he went on, "and protect 'em I will if I have to kill both of you to do it.

"Get ye to the sweeps, Harry March.

There's evil aplenty to mark up agin you. You, Mohican, harken to me. You're an honorable man and I'll make a compact with you. Do you give me your word to have done with March until we're safe from them red devils ashore?"

The Mohican nodded, but the look of hate he cast at the retreating figure of his enemy evidenced his intention not to let this enforced truce exist a moment longer than was necessary.

"Muskrat speak truth," he said. "Hurons have great anger at slaying of woman. Wild Flower and Pale Lily must be safe. Chingachgook no kill Tall Pine—now!"

And he held out his hand to Hutter in imitation of the white man's pledge of good faith.

" 'Tis well," said Hutter, grasping the Indian's hand. "Tall Pine, as you've named him, has much to answer for and I'll warrant the reckoning is more than he can pay. But, what think ye, Mohican? Is it safe to stay here on the ark?"

Chingachgook studied the shore from which the Hurons had suddenly vanished.

"No be safe to go to big lodge on water," he declared emphatically.

"And why not?"

The Indian paused a moment before answering, and then, seeing that Judith and Hetty had entered the cabin, he said in a low tone:

"Hurons go to big lodge. Know Muskrat come there. Wait for him."

" 'Tis little choice we have left," replied Hutter. "Here on the lake we're helpless. There we've means of defense. I'm of opinion we'd best return to the Castle and face whatever awaits us."

Chingachgook bowed his head in submission. He had pledged the Muskrat his help, and this help included obedience to orders, but deep down in his heart he had the gravest misgivings as to the wisdom of the course. The Castle had been deserted since the night before and, consequently, the Hurons had had ample time to take possession of it, which they could easily do by means of their rafts. This, he believed, had already been done, and he was firmly convinced that even at that moment Rivenoak's warriors were hidden in the "big lodge" waiting to trap the entire party which they knew must eventually return. But it must be as the Muskrat wished; he was the chief. Chingachgook silently seated himself on deck, his rifle across his knees, and looked stoically across the waters. Shyly, Wah-ta-Wah drew close to

him and together they sat in silence while the ark, propelled by Hutter and March, made its way slowly up the lake towards the Castle.

In the cabin Judith sat in mute despair. With the recapture of Leatherstocking, her last hope had vanished. The whole thing seemed a horrible nightmare from which she could not awaken, and she found herself praying for deliverance, even though death at the hands of the savages were the means. To fight further was but to prolong the agony—to hold at arm's length for a brief time the inevitable fate that already had placed its mark upon them.

"Judith, dear, listen," said Hetty, suddenly looking up from the Bible that lay open in her lap. " 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.'

"Those words have a solemn and beautiful meaning for us. We are passing through that valley now, but we are afraid. We are lacking in faith."

"Ah, Hetty, Hetty, we cannot all have the faith that you have," sighed Judith, drawing her sister closer to her. "We are a mere handful and the Indians are a horde. Leatherstocking is a prisoner. His life is worth nothing now. It is more than can be expected of humans—to maintain a faith that circum-

stances have already destroyed. When those we love—"

"Then you do love him? Leatherstocking, I mean," exclaimed Hetty.

"I love only you and father more," came the low answer, "and to think that off there in the forest he may even now be undergoing the most terrible tortures— Oh, Hetty, I can't bear it!"

Judith buried her face in her sister's lap and gave way to her grief in the tears that she had tried so long to withhold.

The girl's worst fears as to Leatherstocking's fate seemed about to be realized. No longer was he treated with the savage courtesy that Rivenoak had commanded as due a brave warrior prisoner. In fact, such little protection as the chief had offered had now been withdrawn, and the savages were being permitted to work their will. All had changed since Harry March's bullet had so cruelly taken the life of Dove Wing. All the fury of the tribe was being vented on the captive, innocent though he was.

In silence Leatherstocking did his best to keep his footing as he was rushed along through the forest. His arms were bound securely to his sides and long ropes of braided

buckskin tied about his shoulders were used as leashes to hasten his progress. Twice he stumbled and fell and each time, before he could regain his feet, he was savagely kicked and beaten and prodded with scalping knives until he again was able to resume the journey. His great self-control alone averted the striking of the death blow then and there. Had he but for a moment cried out in anger or in pain, the Hurons would have despatched him with as little compunction as they would have crushed the head of a snake. Knowing this, he maintained a superb mastery of himself, and, still alive, although bruised and bleeding, he was at length dragged through the last thicket and stood on the shore of Glimmerglass.

For a moment, dazed as he was, he looked about him with an air of unfamiliarity. Then, as his mind grew clearer, he saw that his captors had brought him to the headland that pointed out into the lake directly opposite Muskrat Castle and scarcely a quarter of a mile distant from that deserted structure. But his journey had not yet ended. The Hurons forced him on again, out onto the narrow strip to the very point where the "big lodge in the water" loomed up dead ahead, close enough

to permit him to make out every detail of its odd construction.

This last stage of the mysterious journey had been made in double-quick time and Leatherstocking was panting from his exertions. As he looked at the Castle, he wondered what deviltry was about to be perpetrated by the Hurons, but a rough hand on his shoulder whirled him around and he looked into Rivenoak's cruel face.

"Yengee dog still brave," sneered the chief. "No fear for self. Maybe fear for Wild Flower."

Without giving the prisoner time to answer, he turned away and Leatherstocking was forced back against a tree to which he was bound so firmly that he could move only his head. The warriors stood back, and a lone figure stepped in front of him. It was Black Eagle.

"Yengee kill Dove Wing when Black Eagle look on," he snarled. "Now Yengee look on while Hurons kill white woman."

So this was the meaning of the hurried journey to the shore!

Leatherstocking writhed in agony as he at last understood the form his torture was to

take. He was to look on, helpless, while the Hurons revenged themselves upon Judith!

Suddenly a low cry of warning sounded, and the Indians vanished silently in the underbrush, leaving Leatherstocking bound to the tree facing the Castle. He turned his head and saw the ark making its way up the lake towards the headland. The curtain was about to rise on the last act of the tragedy.

On board the ark the situation was unchanged save that Chingachgook from his place in the bow was redoubling his vigilance as the Castle was neared. He scanned the shore and then the water ahead. Not a sign of danger was visible and yet he felt its proximity. He looked about him uneasily and his eyes rested on the water now bright with the direct rays of the midday sun. He started and an exclamation of alarm escaped him. Lying flat on his stomach, he reached over the side and pulled from the water—a moccasin!

The Mohican hastened to the stern, where Hutter and March were pulling steadily at the sweeps. March, in whose memory the threatening knife blade was still fresh, shrank back, but Chingachgook, completely ignoring him, held up his find before the curious eyes of Hutter.

*A Pathé Picture.*

HE SWUNG HER AROUND UNTIL SHE FACED HIM.

"Huron moccasin," he cried. "Float in water!"

Hutter did not comprehend.

"Well," he said, "what's that to do with us?"

"Mean Huron on raft go to Castle," replied Chingachgook. "Lose moccasin in lake."

March laughed derisively.

"That moccasin drifted there from shore," he declared.

The Mohican paid no heed.

"Go back—quick," he exclaimed, appealing to Hutter; "not safe in big lodge. Hurons there sure."

"Can't go back now," replied Hutter. "We ain't sartain the Injins have done as you say. Anyway, we'll go ahead and see. Pull away, March."

Chingachgook tossed the moccasin to the deck and without another word returned to the bow, where he crouched with his rifle ready. The ark resumed its journey.

Leatherstocking strained in vain at his bonds. The ark was now so near the headland that he had seen Chingachgook lift something from the water and confer hurriedly with Hutter and March. His eyes turned to the Castle and for a second he saw a Huron scalp lock

appear in the window and then vanish. He groaned aloud. The muzzle of a rifle pressed against his side and he looked down to see Briarthorn crouching in the bush beside him, fingering the trigger menacingly.

"Killer-of-the-Deer not cry out warning," cautioned his one-time Delaware brother.

The captive's head drooped in despair. He was powerless to save his friends from the trap the Hurons had prepared. Muskrat Castle was full of savages, of that he had now no doubt. Totally unaware of this, Hutter was bringing the ark closer and closer each second. Judith was on board. Leatherstocking could see her and Hetty emerge from the cabin and stand beside Chingachgook and Wah-ta-Wah in the bow.

Scarce forty feet now separated the ark from the landing stage. Hutter and March were cautiously maneuvering the craft so as to effect a good landing. The space narrowed. Thirty feet between Judith and a fate far worse than death. No physical torture conceivable in a Huron mind could bring such suffering as this fiendishly planned vengeance of the slain Dove Wing's people.

The savages in the bush pressed forward,

their fierce eyes turned on the ark. There was an air of expectancy about that communicated itself to Leatherstocking, although they were outside the limited range of his vision. Briarthorn, however, kept his attention centered on the prisoner.

Again the rifle pressed viciously against Leatherstocking's side. Mechanically he looked down and Briarthorn's cruel eyes, now gleaming with the lust for blood, flashed the warning his lips did not speak.

The ark touched the landing stage and Chingachgook tossed the rope over an iron hook. In the window of the Castle, Leatherstocking could see three Huron scalp locks thrown into relief against the dark interior by the rays of the sun.

Hutter left the sweep and leaped lightly to the staging, followed by Harry March. For a second they stood still, looking cautiously about them, then they stole up to the door. Once more they stopped and March drew his hunting knife. The warriors in the bushes crouched in tense silence.

With a sudden move, Hutter threw open the door and swung his rifle to a position of readiness, but no sound came from inside. Appar-

ently satisfied that all was well, he stepped across the threshold and disappeared, March pressing closely behind him.

Suddenly a wild shriek arose from the Castle and two rifle shots resounded.

This was the signal Rivenoak had been awaiting. Leaping out into the open, he raised his voice in a frightful war cry as his savages broke from cover.

"Look, Yengee," he roared, grasping Leatherstocking by the hair and turning his ashen face towards the Castle staging which was now a scene of pitched battle between two white men and a dozen savages.

"Look—see how Muskrat die!"

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE ATTACK

No sooner had the ark touched the landing stage than Hutter regretted his stubbornness in proceeding to the Castle against Chingachgook's advice.

"Somethin's wrong, I'm afeered," he muttered, looking uneasily about him.

March made no reply, although the remark was obviously addressed to him. The Mohican, who was holding the loose end of the mooring rope which he had merely looped through the iron ring in the piling, looked up sharply at them.

"Be ready for fight," he cautioned in low tones.

Hutter nodded and leaped upon the staging. March followed him and the two stood a moment in silence, their eyes fixed on the closed door of the Castle as if they hoped some miracle would give them the power to peer through it.

"Come on," whispered Hutter, and he tip-

toed towards the door, his rifle held in front of him and his finger on the trigger.

March kept close behind him. Together they approached the door, and again they paused.

"Stand ready now," commanded Hutter. "I'm goin' to open it."

The other drew his long hunting knife, a more effective weapon at close range than a rifle.

"Ready," he said tensely.

Hutter threw the door wide, at the same instant leveling his rifle into the room. There was no one in sight, everything was apparently as they had left it the night before.

Reassured, they stepped boldly inside. Hutter looked back towards the ark and saw Chingachgook with rifle aimed at the door. Beside him stood Judith, a pistol clasped firmly in her hand. Hutter turned back to his task.

Suddenly from one of the bedrooms three warriors sprang out, the foremost uttering a piercing shriek of triumph. Hardly waiting to take aim, Hutter fired at point-blank range, and the leader crashed to the floor, his head split by the ball. Now the room seemed literally alive with hideously painted Hurons yelling like fiends and charging the two white men

who were vainly attempting to retreat towards the door.

Hutter, somewhat in advance of his companion, found himself surrounded by savages, and desperately he swung his rifle butt to break his way through them. One grasped the whirling rifle, but Hutter's foot doubled him up and he released his hold. A Huron leaped forward with tomahawk upraised and with terrific force Tom's rifle descended, crushing the skull of his foe like an egg shell.

Nearer the door, March was desperately returning blow for blow. Three warriors were engaging him and they pressed so close that he could not fire the long-barreled weapon which was so deadly in his hands. Realizing its uselessness, he hurled it from him and again drew his hunting knife. A savage leaped at him and the knife ripped a deep gash in his stomach. The other two attacked together and only March's prodigious strength saved him. His left hand fixed itself in a crushing grip on the throat of one while his knife plunged hilt deep into the breast of the other. Taking advantage of this circumstance, he leaped through the door and out onto the staging.

Meanwhile Hutter was fighting a losing fight.

His rifle was torn from his grasp and a blow from a war club dropped him stunned to the floor. While two warriors bound him, the others leaped after the retreating March.

Harry's attempt to regain the ark was doomed to failure. Behind him came half a dozen Hurons and they bore down on him just as he reached the edge of the staging. Chingachgook had freed the mooring rope and the ark was now eight or ten feet away from the staging. Crouching on the deck, the Mohican fired and one of March's pursuers pitched headlong into the water.

March stumbled and fell, and instantly two Hurons pounced upon him, but they misjudged his strength. Raising himself suddenly on hands and knees, he shook them from him as though they were dead leaves and stumbled to his feet. Again his pursuers closed in and again Chingachgook fired. A Huron staggered back and fell. A second report came from the ark and this time it was Judith's pistol that came between Harry and the death blow an upraised tomahawk was about to deliver. Now Judith leaped to the door of the cabin.

"Hetty," she cried, "help me!"

The younger girl stepped out on deck just as a shower of arrows from the Hurons on the

staging struck the ark. One grazed Judith's shoulder, but she paid no heed. Grasping her sister's hand, she ran to the stern, where the sweeps still hung in their locks. Instinctively, Hetty seemed to know what was expected of her. She threw all her weight against one sweep while Judith pulled desperately at the other and the ark slowly swung its bow back towards the Castle. A short stroke and it grazed the piling.

"Jump, Harry, jump!" screamed Judith.

March tore himself free from his antagonists and leaped. With a jarring crash he landed on the deck while the ark swung away from the Castle.

But escape was not to come thus easily. Three Hurons ran to the edge of the staging and sprang out across the slowly widening strip of water that measured the safety of the ark. True as arrows they struck the deck and Harry March again found himself surrounded. This time, however, he was not alone. Chingachgook, forgetting for the moment his feud with the white man, took aim and fired and one of the redskins toppled over dead. Then the Mohican threw himself at the remaining two, engaging them at close range until March had regained his feet. About the deck the four

struggled with a fury that set the ark to tossing as if it were riding a storm.

In the stern Judith and Hetty, the latter assisted by Wah-ta-Wah, were working the sweeps in desperation. The ark was pulling away from the Castle, but so slowly that it hardly seemed to move at all. Frantically Judith looked back towards the staging and in horror she saw her father, bound hand and foot, the captive of the savages. But that was not all. Around the side of the Castle came a canoe, and in it were two Huron warriors paddling rapidly after the ark. One dropped his paddle and raised his bow. An arrow whistled through the air, barely missing Judith and burying its flint head in the cabin.

With increasing speed the canoe came on while Chingachgook and March, unaware of this new menace, fought on in a last heart-breaking attempt to drive off the two Hurons who already had gained the ark. March's great strength, so sorely taxed by his tremendous exertions, was rapidly waning and it was with difficulty that he kept his foe's knife from plunging into him. The Mohican, too, was sorely pressed. His antagonist had tripped him and was slowly forcing him to the deck.

Judith could see no hope. With the ark's

defenders gradually being beaten down and reenforcements on the way, death seemed inevitable. There was one final hope, although a slender one. Trailing behind the ark was a canoe, and to this she now turned her eyes.

"Hetty," she gasped, "the canoe!"

Hetty understood. She released her hold on the sweep and reached for the line, pulling the canoe alongside. Judith ran to it and stepped in, followed by her sister.

"Wah-ta-Wah," she cried to the Indian girl who was watching with mild interest, "hurry!"

Wah-ta-Wah shook her head.

"No come," she said, calmly. "Stay with Chingachgook."

There was time for no more. Judith seized a paddle and in another moment the canoe was speeding away from the now motionless ark. Behind it relentlessly came the other canoe bearing the two Hurons, who now bent to their task with all their strength.

By a dexterous twist of his body, Chingachgook suddenly threw the Huron from him and, crouching, leaped at his prostrate foe. The warrior's tomahawk swung aimlessly and the Mohican wrenched it from the weary hand that held it. Then with all the power of his arm he buried it in the skull of the luckless brave.

Harry March was faring less well. His strength was gone and the scalping knife was about to accomplish its purpose when the Mohican took a hand. His fingers closed about the Huron throat and gripped it with a deadly pressure. The warrior struggled frantically to free himself, but his efforts were fruitless. His breath came in gasps, and then he sank limply to the deck.

Chingachgook stood back and coldly regarded the man whose life he had saved. He hated March and had sworn vengeance upon him for delivering Leatherstocking into the hands of the Hurons and no less for his deliberate murder of an inoffensive Huron girl. They were alone on the ark, save for Wah-ta-Wah and the two slain warriors. This was the chance for which he had waited—the chance to even all scores. March sensed his danger and recoiled before the Mohican's baleful glare.

A Huron war cry rose from the Castle and both Chingachgook and March turned their eyes in that direction. A group of warriors stood on the staging and one of them held aloft an object that made Hurry Harry turn ashen in fear. It was a scalp!

Silently the Mohican regarded this gruesome trophy. Its meaning was clear to him, but his

face became a mask which concealed whatever emotion he might feel. Even the threatening actions of the redskins on the staging failed to alter his expression. Not so March. His fear was painfully manifest as he saw the savages board Hutter's spare canoes and paddle rapidly towards the ark. Two rafts, each filled with warriors, rounded the side of the Castle from the rear where they had evidently been hidden, and this warlike armada converged on the lone craft where two men, deadly enemies though they were, found themselves bound for the moment in a common cause.

Harry March leaped for the stubby mast and in a moment the sail was set. A fresh breeze that had sprung up in the darkening northwest caught the patch of white and the ark was sent scudding down the lake at a speed too great for the pursuers to follow.

Meanwhile, Judith and Hetty were keeping their canoe well ahead of that in which the two Hurons were pursuing them. Time after time the redskins stopped their paddling long enough to send an arrow at the fleeing girls, but these went wide of their mark. In a rage, the Indians bent their paddles under the great force of their strokes and suddenly one of the blades snapped off short. Now hopelessly

handicapped, the Hurons gave up the chase and made their way slowly to shore.

Far down the lake the ark was coming about. It had outdistanced the redskin fleet, the disgruntled members of which were paddling rapidly towards the headland.

Most of this uneven battle had been seen by the captive Leatherstocking and to him it seemed that he had lived through ages of suffering since the Hurons had first tied him to the tree in full view of Muskrat Castle. He had seen Hutter and March cautiously enter the building and only March emerge. He had experienced a thrill of savage pleasure at Hurry Harry's brave fight against seemingly overwhelming odds on the landing stage and when Judith's timely maneuver of the ark had saved the white man, he had uttered a fierce cry of encouragement. This brought down upon him the renewed wrath of his captors and a Huron fist dealt him a stinging blow on the lips.

The escape of the ark drove Rivenoak mad with fury, and only the appearance of Hutter, bound hand and foot, made amends for this disappointment.

"See," he cried, "Muskrat scalp soon hang at Huron belt!"

Leatherstocking groaned involuntarily. Only too well did he know the fate that was in store for Judith's father.

Now his eyes turned towards the ark. Judith and Hetty were just pulling away from it, and behind them came two Hurons in another canoe. His brave heart could stand no more. Wildly he implored Rivenoak to spare the women, but his appeal fell upon deaf ears. Rivenoak was certain that at last his warriors were about to seize victory from the very hands of defeat and his cruel joy knew no bounds.

The unequal race went on. The strip of water between the two canoes grew narrower and one of the Hurons sent an arrow whizzing towards the fugitives. It missed and he tried again with the same result. Then, suddenly, when all hope seemed lost, a broken paddle put the Huron canoe out of the running. Judith and Hetty had won their race with death.

Leatherstocking strained at his bonds and the Delaware cry of victory rang from his lips to be stilled a moment later as a raftload of Hurons from the Castle landed on the beach, for one of these warriors proudly exhibited a scalp. The story needed no telling: Leatherstocking knew and bowed his head to hide the agony of grief that overwhelmed him.

At last the torture seemed ended. Rivenoak's victory had been bought at a high price. One white scalp had cost him six men killed and at least ten wounded and he gave up in disgust. Tersely ordering Leatherstocking unbound from the tree, he led his warriors back through the forest, leaving the remnants of the attacking party to return as best they might. Again the captive was brutally dragged over the rough ground and beaten when he fell. But he was content. Judith had escaped and nothing else mattered.

Glimmerglass now appeared to be cleared of savages and Judith and Hetty turned their canoe back towards the Castle. Wearily they plied their paddles and their progress was slow, for the storm that was heralded by the dark clouds in the northwest was drawing nearer. The wind swept in violent gusts across the lake, churning the water into myriads of small waves in which the canoe pitched and tossed.

With the strength born of great determination, however, the two girls fought on, forcing their tired muscles to obey, and finally they drew up to the Castle landing stage. Heedless of the possibility that some of the savages were still lurking inside, they landed and hurried to the open door.

"Judith," gasped Hetty, "listen!"

From within came the voice of Hutter raised in a wild song of the sea. Then abruptly he shouted: "At 'em, Harry—the red devils—there'll be loot aplenty for us all—a square divvy, that's my way—"

His voice trailed off into unintelligible mutterings, and then all was silent.

Judith stepped in front of her sister as if to shield her from some unknown terror and crossed the threshold in breathless apprehension. The sight that met her eyes held her motionless with horror. The Spirit of Destruction seemed to have swept through the room, leaving behind it a trail of chaotic wreckage in which nothing remained whole. The table and chairs had been reduced to splinters, the beds had been dragged from their places in the sleeping rooms and wrenched apart, the sea chest alone had withstood the savage assault of tomahawk and war club, but its sides and top were split and dented. At her feet lay the body of a Huron warrior; by the window were two more.

All these things Judith saw as through a haze, like some vague and wraithlike scene in a terrible dream, but the one object that stood out clearly in this house of the dead was a hud-

dled figure in a far corner. It was her father —Floatin' Tom Hutter—and his head—but she could look no more. Dully she turned away and grasped her sister's shoulder, holding the girl so that she could not see the awful thing that lay beyond.

"Wait outside," she said in a strange, harsh voice, "until I call."

Hetty looked at her wonderingly and obeyed.

Judith clenched her hands and steeled herself for the task she had to perform. Summoning all her courage, she set her drawn white face towards the corner and fixed her eyes on the pitiful victim of inhuman foes. Like one walking in a dream, she picked her way across the wrecked room and knelt beside her father. He stirred and instinctively she drew back, but realizing that she must not flinch, she quickly ripped the hem from the bottom of her petticoat and bound it tightly about his brow. Then she turned the body over and, resting the head in her lap, she called out:

"Hetty."

As she did so, she heard the voice of Harry March, and she knew that the ark had returned.

In answer to her cry, Hetty entered, followed by March, Chingachgook and Wah-ta-Wah.

"Father!" she screamed, staring wildly at the figure on the floor.

The head turned and the eyes opened. For a moment Hutter's gaze wavered and then it rested on Hetty.

"I'm not your father," he whispered hoarsely, speaking with an effort. "He died long ago."

Hetty dropped to her knees beside him, but Judith waved her back.

"He is delirious," she said, sobbing. "He doesn't know what he says."

Again Hutter's lips moved, and they bent close.

"—copper box—chest—your father's name —"

The head sank forward in Judith's arms, the body grew limp—and so passed the Master of Muskrat Castle, dying as he had lived, a mystery.

In the drenching rain that came with the early twilight, Tom Hutter was laid to rest beneath the waters of Glimmerglass. His secret went with him, for the sea chest had been emptied by the Hurons. More than that, the false bottom had been crushed in and its contents were gone.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE RECKONING

Darkness descended upon the Castle, and with its coming the storm increased in fury. Vivid lightning tore across the black sky, disclosing the surface of the lake whipped into waves by the shrieking wind, and the thunder echoed among the hills.

Judith and Hetty, stunned at the cruel death of the man they had known as their father, seemed utterly incapable of thought or action. With his dying words, Hutter had denied all relationship to them and they were torn by conflicting emotions. In a flash they had been bereft of their lifelong protector and of their right to his name. The reference to the copper box, presumably as the receptacle in which the solution of the mystery would be found, might as well never have been uttered, for the marauding savages had left nothing which could be carried away. The copper box, provided it was not the creation of a pain-shattered mind, was undoubtedly in Rivenoak's possession by

this time and, therefore, lost to them forever. In this hour of trial, Hetty sought consolation in the pages of her Bible, which she read by the flickering light of the fire that had been kindled on the hearth. Judith stood at the window, her unseeing eyes turned towards the storm-lashed lake illumined at intervals by the fitful play of lightning.

Under the busy hands of Chingachgook and Wah-ta-Wah the Castle had been restored to some semblance of its former order. The bodies of the Indians had been tossed into the lake, the débris had been cleared away, and from the few remaining food stores a scanty supper had been prepared.

For this, Hurry Harry March was the only one who seemed to have any appetite. He ate hurriedly and then went out on the landing stage, where he busied himself, ignoring the rain which drenched him to the skin. First he cut the sail from the ark and with it fashioned a canopy which he stretched on sticks of wood as a covering for one of the canoes. With rope and buckskin thongs he made this contrivance fast to the sides. A second canoe was pulled into place before the staging and the first was tied to it. Apparently satisfied with his work, he reëntered the Castle and took

his place silently at one end of the hearth, where he sat without once looking up. Judith had seen all this from the window, and she looked at March questioningly, but his eyes were fixed sullenly on the fire.

"Wild Flower be safe now," said the Mohican, starting up and approaching Judith. "Chingachgook go Huron camp—find Leatherstocking, maybe."

"But you can't go in this storm," replied Judith wearily. "You'd never reach the shore."

"Storm gone," he declared. "Just rain now."

Then he strode over to where March sat by the fire.

"Tall Pine," he muttered, his hand resting on the hilt of his knife, "Tall Pine be guard here till Chingachgook come back."

There was a threat in the words as the Indian spoke them—an order to March to protect the women with his life or accept the consequences and what those consequences would be was unmistakably indicated by the knife which he had already come to fear. March nodded a surly acquiescence.

Without another word, Chingachgook strode from the room, and a few moments later was

paddling through the driving rain towards the headland.

For half an hour after the Indian left, dead silence reigned in the Castle. Hetty's weary eyes closed, and she nodded over the page. Judith stared into the fire and Wah-ta-Wah peered through the window into the darkness as if trying to catch a farewell glimpse of her lover. March paced uneasily to and fro, his furtive glance now resting on Judith, now on the other two.

"Hetty," called Judith gently, rising and placing her hand on her sister's shoulder, "don't sit up any longer. There is a blanket left in the bedroom. Go in there and get some rest, please, dear."

Hetty rose sleepily to her feet and closed the Book.

"I am very tired, Judith," she admitted with a faint smile, "but I don't want to leave you. Won't you come with me? You need rest as well as I."

"No, dear, I'm all right," answered Judith. "I will wait here for the Mohican. Wah-ta-Wah will go with you."

The Delaware girl flashed baleful eyes at March, but his back was turned and he seemed to be paying no attention. Hetty kissed Judith

good-night and left the room, followed reluctantly by Wah-ta-Wah.

March looked craftily over his shoulder as the door closed and saw that Judith was standing before the fire gazing fixedly into the glowing embers. As silently as a panther stalking its prey, he crept up behind her. His big hands grasped her shoulders, and he swung her around until she faced him. The fear and loathing that he read in her eyes infuriated him and viciously he bent his head and kissed her.

"You beast!" she exclaimed in a low voice, and wrenched herself free.

"I'm only takin' what's mine by rights," he returned angrily.

"You have no right to put your hands upon me, much less to insult me with your kisses. If Leatherstocking were here—"

"Ah, but he ain't here," March snarled. "By now he's felt a Mingo's scalpin' knife, so you needn't count on him."

Judith recoiled in horror.

"Jude, you haven't been fair with me," he went on, adopting new tactics. "In the old days you didn't think so badly of me. I had an idee that maybe this time you'd agree to marry me. We could go to the settlemints and there'd be an end to it. But when Leather-

stocking come here, you had no thought for me, only for him.

"Now he's gone and your father, or whoever he was, is gone, too. You and Hetty are alone. Say the word, gal, and we three will start for the settlemint to-night—now. We'd be there by midday to-morrow—just an easy run down the outlet. What do you say?"

Through this long plea, Judith had been eyeing him coldly. Now she turned on him in a fury.

"What do I say?" she cried. "I say that you, Harry March, are lower than the lowest beast that lives! You have betrayed a white man into the hands of the Hurons, you have murdered an innocent and harmless Indian girl, and now you ask me to be your wife! I would sooner go to Rivenoak's lodge as his squaw!"

March went white with anger. He was about to speak, but Judith's blazing eyes held him silent and she went on relentlessly:

"But for your cowardly shot of warning, Leatherstocking would not now be a prisoner—or dead. He was your friend! He trusted you and you deliberately gave him up to those fiends! But for you my father would not now be sleeping at the bottom of the lake. When you killed that little Indian girl, you signed

his death warrant, and Leatherstocking's too. You sneaking ingrate! You murderer!"

Judith sprang at the hulking form before her and her fists beat madly on his breast. March was so overcome with astonishment at this unexpected outburst that he retreated before it. In a moment, however, he mastered his surprise. He caught the little hands in his and held them powerless and then he drew the girl to him.

"Now, my lady, if you've had your say, I'll have mine," he snarled. "You're comin' with me to-night, whether you like it or not."

"Then you will have to kill me first," she replied calmly, but with a determination that could not be misunderstood. Then contemptuously, "That should be easy for you since killing women comes so naturally to you."

With an oath, March threw her from him and stood looking down at her in a rage that distorted his face. Judith returned his gaze unflinchingly.

"Harry March," she said with deadly earnestness, "you will answer for these insults to me—you will answer to Leatherstocking, if he still lives—"

"Don't count on that," he interrupted with

a vicious leer. "I'll warrant he's dead now!"

"—or to Chingachgook if he doesn't," the girl continued, not heeding the interruption.

At the mention of the Mohican's name, March turned a sickly white and glanced furtively at the door. Judith noted his fear.

"You contemptible coward!" she said, with withering scorn. "You are very brave when threatened with the name of a man you believe to be dead, but you cringe like the miserable cur you are at the mention of one you know to be alive."

March could stand no more. Goaded beyond endurance by Judith's denunciation, he put all caution behind him.

"Talk all you like," he cried, "your time for talkin' is about over. I'm leaving here in a few minutes and you're goin' with me, but first let me tell you somethin' for you to think over when you're my squaw!

"I've wanted you a long time—ever sence you began to grow up, and I made up my mind to have you. When I met Leatherstocking on the way to Glimmerglass I was afeerd you'd fall in love with him, but I had a way to keep him from fallin' in love with you. I give him

to understand that you was the mistress of an officer in one of the forts, and he believed it, the fool! He believed every word of it!

"I saw how he tried to keep out of your way, but you wouldn't have it. You hunted him out. So I had to think out another plan—somethin' that would settle him for good and all. But the plan come to me all worked out. When he went ashore with that damned Injin last night I fixed him. I waited ontil I heerd the loon cry that showed he was in the Mingo camp and then I fired that pistol. Oh, it wasn't no accident and it wasn't no mistake! I did it deliberate and it worked. The Mingos caught him jist like I hoped they would.

"And I killed the Injin girl a-purpose, too —I killed her so the Mingos 'ud kill Leatherstocking. Now you know you can't trifle with me any longer. You're comin' with me and you're comin' now!"

Judith heard this exultant confession of infamy with a feeling of horror. Too dazed to cry out her loathing, she stood staring at him in utter disbelief. March stepped towards her and reached out his hand. This movement brought her back to her own peril and, with a shriek, she ran from him. He leaped for

her, but suddenly found himself facing a rifle held unswervingly in the hands of Wah-ta-Wah. Attracted by the loud voices, Hetty and the Indian girl had crept into the room, and so intent had March been on the evil business in hand that he had not heard them.

"Stop!" cried Wah-ta-Wah, menacing him with his own weapon which he had left leaning against the wall near the door to the bedroom.

"You fool!" he snarled. "Drop that gun!"

Again he reached for Judith.

"Stop!" repeated the Delaware girl. "Wah-ta-Wah shoot if Tall Pine touch Wild Flower!"

March carefully judged his distance from her, then with a lightning-like swing of his hand, he knocked the heavy weapon from her grasp. Hetty leaped in front of him, but he sent her to the floor with a cruel blow of his fist. He grasped Judith and, tossing her over his shoulder, rushed to the outer door.

With a crash, the door flew open and there on the threshold, his clothes dripping wet, stood —Leatherstocking!

A cry of fear mingled with amazement burst from March's white lips, and he staggered back like one who had received a stunning blow.

Judith slipped from his nerveless arms and he stood trembling like an aspen at sight of the man he had so grievously wronged.

"You!" he gasped hoarsely, his eyes starting from his head.

"Yes, and no thanks to you," came the grim answer.

"We were—just—" March began in confusion.

"I know," replied Leatherstocking. "I've been a-standin' out there in the rain for some time, and I heerd every word you said. We'll settle that later."

A sob from Judith caused him to glance down. She was kneeling where March had dropped her, and Leatherstocking hurried to her side.

"Now then, Judith, don't cry," he said softly.

"It's joy that's making me cry," she answered, as he lifted her to her feet. "I thought you were dead, but you've been spared to me."

She caught his hand and pressed it to her lips. Leatherstocking put an arm around her and held her close for a moment and then led her over to Hetty.

"March," he said brusquely, turning to that individual, who was watching this scene with

a sneer on his cruel lips, "you're to blame for all this trouble. I've thought it from the first and now I've heerd you admit it."

"Well, and what are you goin' to do about it? The Mingos is probably after you now."

"No, they're not," Leatherstocking replied. "I'm not an escaped prisoner. I'm here because I promised Rivenoak I'd bring you back to answer for killin' that girl this afternoon. If you go back with me and give yourself up, Judith and Hetty will be spared. If you don't, the Mingos will attack the Castle at daylight and you know what that means. It's your life or the lives of these two girls. What's your answer?"

March shuddered in horror, but made an attempt, although a futile one, to bluster.

"My answer is that I'll see you in hell afore I give myself up to them murderin' devils," he shouted wildly. "You're a fool to think I'd do it. I'm goin' to the settlemints. Let the Mingos get me there if they can!"

He dashed for the door, but Leatherstocking stepped in front of him.

"You're just the kind of a coward I thought," he cried. "To save your own worthless hide, you'd turn these two girls over to the Mingos like you did me.

"Harken to me, Harry March! There's a score to be settled betwixt us. I'm goin' to settle that, and then I'm goin' to take you back to Rivenoak with me!"

"Stand out o' my way, damn you!" roared March, drawing his hunting knife. "Stand out o' my way or I'll cut ye in ribbons!"

Judith screamed and Hetty covered her eyes with her hands as the gigantic woodsman, driven wild by fear, launched himself at the stripling who barred his way to freedom and even to life itself.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE PAYMENT

Leatherstocking braced himself for the shock. With his left foot advanced, he crouched low and met the full force of March's onslaught with his shoulder. Despite his own strength, the weight of his opponent's body drove him crashing back against the door and he had just time to dodge the vicious knife thrust.

The ferocity of the lunge caused March to lose his footing for a second and Leatherstocking, leaping in close, caught the knife hand in both his own. He gave the wrist a sudden backward twist and the weapon clattered to the floor where, at the risk of being trampled upon, Wah-ta-Wah recovered it. The advantage thus gained by Leatherstocking, however, was short-lived, for the giant woodsman instantly regained his balance and shot his fist forward like a battering-ram. Leatherstocking dodged, but not quickly enough. The blow landed on the side of his head and set him spinning across the room. By a desperate effort, he prevented himself from falling and managed to twist his

body to one side, striking out furiously as March charged him again. His fist landed full on March's chin, and the Castle trembled as the huge bulk of the woodsman measured its length on the floor.

For a moment Leatherstocking stood looking at his fallen foe and, noting no movement, he bent forward to ascertain the exact result of his blow. Like a flash the long arms shot upward and the powerful fingers fastened themselves like vises about his throat. He was dragged downward and, although he struggled desperately, he felt himself being slowly crushed in the embrace.

Judith cried out in agony and would have rushed to Leatherstocking's aid had not Wah-ta-Wah restrained her. The Delaware girl had seen something which told her March's suddenly restored strength was but a flash in the pan. His eyes were rolling with pain and dizziness from the blow that had felled him, and even the effort required to retain his grip on Leatherstocking's throat was telling on him severely.

"No fear Tall Pine now," exclaimed Wah-ta-Wah, pressing Judith behind her.

And indeed it seemed she had spoken truly. Leatherstocking tore at the great hands that

were trying desperately to strangle him, and with a sudden swift movement he wrenched loose from their hold.

Now fully aware of his danger, March stumbled unsteadily to his feet and stood looking wildly about him like a caged beast. Leatherstocking crouched between him and the door, relentlessly awaiting the next move.

"Now will you go to Rivenoak with me, or must I take you?" he demanded.

In answer March roared out a curse, but before he could launch the attack he was planning, Leatherstocking was upon him. His fists rained blow after blow on the head and chest of his betrayer and he dodged and shifted so bewilderingly that hardly a blow landed upon him in return. Desperately March swung his great arms, lunging blindly this way and that, but without avail. The merciless assault drove him steadily back until his way was blocked by the wall.

Bruised and bleeding from the hard knuckles that pounded him, seemingly from all sides, he made one last effort to rush his foe. It was the move Leatherstocking had been waiting for and he took instant advantage of it. March plunged forward, then staggered back against the wall, literally beaten down by the storm of

blows from the fists of his enemy. He dropped to one knee, raising his arms to protect his head and face, but they were powerless to stave off the fury of the attack. With a groan, he sank to the floor, a pitiful chattering hulk, now begging for mercy.

Panting from his exertions, but still prepared to carry on the fight, Leatherstocking stood over his beaten foe.

"Will you come now, you coward?" he asked grimly.

March groaned and cried out in horror.

"We're losin' time," persisted Leatherstocking. "Answer me!"

"I can't—go," came the whispered answer, gaspingly. "They—they'd kill me!"

Judith ran forward and caught Leatherstocking's hands.

"Spare him that, please—for my sake," she pleaded. "He has been punished enough. Remember that he's a white man—you couldn't send one of your own kind to such a death. He has blackened my name and his treachery has killed one very dear to me, but—you can't deliver him into the hands of those fiends!"

"But, Judith, it's his life or yours," exclaimed Leatherstocking.

"I'll chance it, even with those odds," she

replied. "We can surely find some way to escape. Let him go to the settlements, now. Give him that chance. If there is any humanity in his cruel heart, he will suffer for the evil he has brought here. Promise that he shall go free!"

Leatherstocking drew back. March's infamy was unspeakable. He had betrayed his own race, he had wantonly slain the gentle Dove Wing, he had brought death to Hutter. He deserved no consideration and yet—he was a white man. The fate that awaited him if he were given over to Rivenoak was awful to contemplate. Judith was right.

"Very well," answered Leatherstocking slowly. "He shall go free."

Then he turned to the cowering figure on the floor.

"Get up, March, and make your start," he commanded. "Take your rifle and a canoe. Don't let me come across you agin, or I'll forget that you are white. Now go!"

March rose weakly to his feet and for a moment leaned against the wall for support. Then he staggered across the floor, grasped his rifle and passed out into the storm and the night.

Leatherstocking watched in silence the departure of the man who had been his friend.

Hurry Harry March, his trusted companion on many a hunting trail—a murderer, a coward, an enemy to his own race! It was unbelievable. For a moment tears dimmed his eyes, and he brushed them away with a savage sweep of his hand as he told himself that March had removed himself from the bounds of human sympathy. Outcast by white men, hunted like a wild beast by red, he must now accept the consequences of the havoc he had wrought. He must travel the trail alone.

It was Judith who interrupted this sad reverie.

"Shall we start now?" she asked, her voice trembling with suppressed excitement.

Leatherstocking shook his head.

"We'd best wait till daylight," he replied. "You get some sleep. I'll wait here."

Intuitively conscious of his grief, she murmured a soft "Good night" and left the room. The fire died down to a soft glow, and far into the night he stood at the window with watchful eyes turned shoreward.

The fury of the storm had abated when Harry March slammed the door of Muskrat Castle behind him for the last time. Still dazed at the suddenness of his defeat, he looked about in bewilderment as if he knew not what way

to turn, and the rain beat down upon him unheeded. But one thought took definite shape in his mind—the thought that he must speedily put all the distance possible between him and Glimmerglass Lake—and this stirred his weary, pain-wracked body into action.

Tied to the landing stage and plainly visible in the faint rays of firelight from the window was the canoe he had prepared for Judith, its canopy now loosened and one corner whipping in the wind. With an exclamation of disgust, he turned away from it and cut the line that made it fast to the second canoe. Into this he stepped and with his paddle sent it out onto the dark water. Apparently unmindful of the direction which his furious strokes were taking him, he forced the frail craft on and on, now driven by a haunting fear that seemed to ride in his wake. Forward into the inky blackness, he drove the canoe. His eyes stared straight ahead, but they saw not the headland that loomed in front of him.

Suddenly the canoe grated on the beach and came to a jolting stop. March leaped out into the shallow water, plunging through it and up on the shore. A great fear lashed him forward, across the sandy shingle and into the underbrush. Panting and gasping, he tore on-

ward into the deeper forest, the shadowy horrors now seeming to press in closer and closer upon him. He stumbled and fell, but instantly he regained his footing and ran on.

A thicket blocked his path and he stopped, paralyzed with fear as an Indian scalp lock rose above it. His hands were thrust out and he shrieked in terror. A Huron tomahawk crashed down with lightninglike swiftness, and Hurry Harry March had reached the end of the lone trail.

A half hour later three Huron warriors ran breathlessly into the camp and their coming threw the tribe into a fury of excitement. These braves were trusted scouts of Rivenoak, and for two days they had been reconnoitering to the east of Glimmerglass. The word they brought back was alarming.

"Many white soldiers are advancing through the forest," the leader declared excitedly.

Pressed for details, he told of coming upon the Yengee column of red-coats less than half a day's march away. They were approaching the head of Glimmerglass and in number they were ten times greater than the Huron war-party.

Rivenoak was infuriated at this menace to his plans. To harry a handful of white settlers

was one thing, to face a detachment of seasoned British troops was quite another. He must act quickly if he would accomplish the purpose he had in mind.

"We met a Yengee scout," continued the spokesman, "but he will not carry back word of our strength to the white chief. See!"

And he held up a grewsome object—a human scalp.

Rivenoak looked at it keenly.

"This came from the head of no white soldier," he declared, holding it before the flickering firelight.

"No soldier," said the other, "but a white scout. Him you call Tall Pine."

An exclamation of savage joy burst from Rivenoak.

"Then but one remains," he cried. "Leatherstocking. He will return, for his lips do not speak lies. To take the Wild Flower and the Pale Lily will be women's work now. Let the white soldiers come. The Hurons will be gone like the shadows of night before the sun's rays!"

From the depths of a thicket, well within hearing, the figure of an Indian crawled silently towards the edge of the forest. Once shielded by trees he rose to his feet. It was Chingach-

gook, who had prolonged his fruitless search for Leatherstocking and thereby gained valuable information of Rivenoak's plans to strike quickly. With all the speed he could summon, the Mohican dashed through the forest and down to the water's edge. From the underbrush he dragged his canoe, and a moment later he was paddling furiously towards Muskrat Castle.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE SERPENT STRIKES

Gray dawn found Leatherstocking and Chingachgook laying final plans for the abandonment of the Castle. The Mohican had recounted in detail the killing of March and the warning of the Huron scouts that the British were advancing.

"But we can't count on that, Sarpent," insisted Leatherstocking. "Maybe it was only a patrol marchin' from one fort to another. In that case, they wouldn't come this way, they'd go straight north'ards. Them Mingos are notorious liars. Most like they'd tell Rivenoak they met the whole British army if they thought such a tale 'ud make 'em out to be braver than what they are."

Chingachgook was silent. This might be the explanation and if it were, Judith and Hetty had little to hope for on that score.

"No, it won't do to figger on any help like that," went on Leatherstocking. "Things are about as bad as they could be, so let's not raise any false hopes."

At this point Judith entered the room, red-eyed from weeping and very evidently unrefreshed by sleep. Soon she was joined by Hetty and Wah-ta-Wah, and a hastily prepared breakfast was disposed of in troubled silence.

"You said we could start at daylight," began Judith, turning to Leatherstocking. "Don't you think we should make all the haste we can?"

"Judith," he replied gravely, "I couldn't tell you all last night. Now you must know. Rivenoak's terms ain't such as you can meet, but I'll tell them. In the first place, he demands that you become a Huron squaw and that Hetty be turned over to the tribe to be taken care of by them. Wah-ta-Wah must be the squaw of Briarthorn."

"The beasts," Judith cried angrily. "What unspeakable villainy!"

"They're Rivenoak's words," Leatherstocking reminded her. "I'm only his messenger. You can't meet the terms, that I know; so you and Hetty and Wah-ta-Wah must escape at once. There are three canoes outside as well as the raft I come on last night. The Sarpent 'll see you through and you can depend on him. Once in the outlet, and you're safe, for the Mingos can't follow you there, havin' no canoes."

"But you," Judith exclaimed, in apprehension, "surely you will go with us?"

Leatherstocking shook his head grimly.

"I go back to the Huron camp and give myself up," he said simply. "I gave Rivenoak my word."

Judith ran to him and threw her arms about him.

"You can't mean that," she cried. "You can't! It would be death! I can't let you go —I love you—don't you understand—I love you!"

Leatherstocking clasped her in his arms and buried his face in her hair. Then determinedly he drew back from her.

"Judith," he said, tensely, "you're makin' it mighty difficult for me to do what I know is right. I love you, I've loved you all along in spite of March's lies. Now, to hear you say you love me, too, it's—it's like plannin' for the future when the end is only a few hours away."

"My darling," she cried, "if it means your death, then I pray God my own will come, too! I won't let you go! I can't!"

"I'm determined," he said, calmly, once more master of himself. "I gave my word to Rivenoak and I must go back."

"Then I'm going with you," interrupted

Hetty, who suddenly stepped before him. "The Hurons will not harm me, and they may hear the message I have for them. Shall we start now?"

Leatherstocking looked at her aghast.

"Why, you can't do that!" he exclaimed. "It would do no good and would just run you into needless danger."

"There will be no danger," replied Hetty calmly, and she passed out to the staging and stepped lightly into one of the canoes.

"Come," she called.

"Hetty can save you," cried Judith. "The Hurons fear her. Please let her go with you."

Leatherstocking was in a quandary. He knew the Hurons would not lay hands on the girl whom they believed to be in the keeping of the Great Manitou, and yet he had no desire to subject her to the dangers that he felt lay ahead. Chingachgook, however, decided for him.

"Take Pale Lily," he urged. "Huron warriors afraid of her. Maybe set Leatherstocking free."

"Have it so then," said Leatherstocking, with resignation.

Gently he took Judith in his arms again and kissed her. He bade farewell to Chingachgook

and Wah-ta-Wah and then stepped into the canoe. Without a backward glance, he paddled away towards shore with Hetty kneeling in front of him.

Around the end of the headland, Leatherstocking guided the craft and the three on the wharf could see it no more.

"Look, Leatherstocking," cried Hetty suddenly, "the Hurons are waiting for us!"

There on the shore, just inside the headland, a group of savages stood on the beach at the point where they believed it most likely that Leatherstocking would land. He paddled steadily on and at length the canoe ran up on the sand. Stepping out, he helped Hetty to land, then turned to face the silent redskins who stood looking on motionless. Foremost in the group was Rivenoak and to him Leatherstocking addressed himself.

"Mingo," he said gravely, "I've come back like I said. One favor I'll ask. Let this girl, the Pale Lily, return to her sister unharmed."

"Leatherstocking speak true," returned the Huron chief. "Keep word to Rivenoak, Rivenoak let Pale Lily go in peace. I have spoken."

Hetty stood at one side looking on curiously. She had not spoken, nor had she made any sign, but the Hurons, fearful of the powers with

which they believed the Great Manitou had endowed her, watched her with awe. When they led Leatherstocking away, she followed in silence.

The canoe bearing Leatherstocking and Hetty had no sooner vanished around the headland than there came to Judith a sudden desperate idea to make one last attempt to save the life of the man she loved. Chingachgook and Wah-ta-Wah, standing at the edge of the staging, were looking off to where they had last seen Leatherstocking. A canoe was tied at the end of the wharf, the one the Mohican had used the night before, and she leaped into it. In a flash she freed it from the ring bolt to which it was tied and was paddling away towards shore before her move was detected. Paying no heed to Chingachgook's pleas that she come back, Judith drove the canoe on through the water. She rounded the headland and paddled rapidly onward until she reached the beach where Leatherstocking and Hetty had landed but a few minutes before.

No one was in sight and Judith leaped out on the sand. This was strange and unfamiliar territory to her and in her excitement she became confused, starting off through the woods in a direction opposite to that taken by Riven-

*A Pathé Picture.*

"JUDITH," SHE MURMURED, "I'M SO VERY TIRED—"

*Leatherstocking.*

oak and his prisoner. Desperately she ran on over the rough ground. She sought only to reach Leatherstocking's side in time to save him by some miraculous means, or to die with him if all failed. From time to time as she ran she was conscious of a curious rumbling sound that rose and fell rhythmically, but she paid no heed.

It was not to the camp that the Hurons led their prisoner. The camp, save a few of the lodges, had vanished. Rivenoak's people had broken camp and were ready to take the trail at the first sign of the threatened British advance. To the foot of the cliff the savages led Leatherstocking and in a natural clearing they halted. There they left him unbound while they piled leaves and dry branches about a tree trunk in ominous preparation for the final act in the tragedy.

Hetty watched with startled eyes, and then she approached Rivenoak.

"Huron," she said earnestly, "I beg you to hear the word of God before you go further with this awful work."

Rivenoak raised his hand and the warriors drew back from their prisoner.

"Pale Lily speak," he said.

"God says 'Thou shalt not kill,'" Hetty

went on. "You cannot give human life, therefore you must not take human life."

With a frown Rivenoak considered this thought. It was a new idea so far as he was concerned and for a moment he turned it over in his mind. At length he reached a decision.

"Pale Lily speaks words of wisdom," he said. "Maybe Great Manitou angry if Hurons take scalp. Leatherstocking kill Lynx. Leave squaw without warrior. Maybe Leatherstocking take Lynx squaw for his squaw. Maybe he be Huron now, not Delaware."

These last were in the form of queries addressed to the prisoner. The answer came quickly and with emphasis.

"Never!" shouted Leatherstocking, defiantly. "I killed the Lynx in a fair fight—it was his life or mine. A white man can't marry an Indian woman, and I'll take no Huron squaw. As for becomin' a Mingo, I'd die first!"

There could be no mistaking the meaning. With death as the alternative, the captive flatly refused to temporize.

From the group of Hurons a ferocious war cry rang out and a warrior pushed his way through them. It was the Panther, kinsman of the dead Lynx's squaw, and the fury of his paint-streaked face made him seem a veritable

demon in human form. He raised his tomahawk and hurled it with deadly aim at Leatherstocking.

Then a miracle was wrought. Leatherstocking stepped aside and as he did so he caught the shaft of the flying weapon in one hand. Before the astonished savages could cry out, the tomahawk was sent whizzing back again. Its keen stone edge split the skull of the Panther, and he fell dead in his tracks.

The instant the tomahawk left his hand, Leatherstocking bounded away into the forest. For a second the Hurons were motionless with amazement and then with fierce cries of anger they set off in pursuit.

To Judith these shouts came faintly as from a distance. In fact, she hardly heeded them, for the rumbling that had at first sounded vague and indistinct now came nearer, and she ran on with renewed strength. It was the beating of drums! Of this she was certain. Or was it but overwrought imagination? Louder and louder it came, and now she could distinguish the martial roll. It *was* the sound of drums!

That could mean but one thing—that a body of troops was near. Then there was still hope that she might save Leatherstocking!

Patiently awaiting the return of the warriors

—for she knew Leatherstocking could not escape—Hetty seated herself on a rock near the tree around which the leaves and branches had been piled. She heard the cries of the pursuers off in the forest and then came an exultant shout that told the story. Leatherstocking had been recaptured. His brave fight for freedom had met with defeat. In a few moments the savages crashed back through the brush, dragging their prisoner, now firmly bound with buckskin thongs.

The fury of the Hurons had passed beyond the stage where words would avail. Hetty felt this to be true and her heart sank within her, but with unflagging courage she boldly approached Rivenoak.

"Your acts are displeasing to God," she said with firmness. "It is wrong for you to torture and kill. There is yet time for you to hear God's word."

"No hear white Manitou's word," exclaimed Rivenoak angrily. "Paleface must die!"

He left her abruptly and stepped up to the prisoner who had been tied securely to the tree.

"Now see if Huron knife draw white blood," he snarled and, stepping back, ordered five of his most powerful warriors to begin the torture.

Leatherstocking knew his death was now only a matter of minutes. Desperately he resolved that he would face it in a manner befitting a white man and, casting a scornful glance at the warriors who had lined themselves up in a row twenty-five feet distant from him, he burst into a loud laugh.

The youthful Black Eagle, bereaved of his loved one by a white man's bullet, cried out in rage and leaped in front of the line of warriors. Before he could be stopped from this usurpation of a full-fledged brave's prerogative, he hurled a stone-headed ax at the hated paleface. The weapon went wide of its mark and Leatherstocking's taunting laugh followed him as he was roughly thrown back into his place among the young men of the tribe.

"Try agin, boy," cried the prisoner derisively, "or the Mingo squaws'll laugh in your face!"

Now a warrior raised his arm, and his tomahawk whizzed through the air, crashing into the tree just above Leatherstocking's head. A savage cry of triumph rose from the redskins, but their victim never winced. Another tomahawk was launched at him by a powerful arm and the bark beside his face was stripped from the tree and dangled from a shred of fiber.

A scalping knife glittered like a flash of winged lightning and pierced the wood so close to his head that a strand of hair was pinned to the tree by its point. But with death flying at him from a dozen hands, Leatherstocking maintained his self-mastery. His sneering smile broadened and in tones of disgust he exclaimed:

"A Delaware squaw could do better!"

At a word from Rivenoak, the warriors withdrew and a moment of tense silence followed. Then a weird chant arose, and the ranks of savages separated. Down the lane thus formed Se-tah-ga, the Medicine Man, in full ceremonial regalia, advanced, now bending his body and now straightening it as he shook a blazing torch which he held in one hand. As he approached the prisoner, his chant rose to a shriek and was taken up by the warriors and squaws until the forest echoed with its piercing and discordant notes.

The meaning of this was clear to Leatherstocking. The test of his courage was over and now the torture was to begin. The waving torch came nearer and nearer and he closed his eyes, patiently awaiting the crackle of branches and the flames that would envelop his body.

The wild cries ceased and the resinous smoke

from the torch made him gasp. He opened his eyes and the sight that met his gaze startled from him an exclamation of fear—not for himself, but for Hetty, who had interposed her slender form between him and the formidable Se-tah-ga. Her hand grasped the torch and stayed it in mid-air.

"The curse of God will fall upon you if you do not stop this murder," she cried.

Se-tah-ga drew back, awed by the girl's fearless eyes.

"The Hurons are led by an evil spirit," she went on. "Already many of their warriors have been slain. They have killed my father and Hurry Harry March, now they seek to kill Leatherstocking. They have disobeyed God's command and the anger of God will wipe their tribe from the earth."

Rivenoak's fear of this "child of the Great Manitou" was great, and he dared not order his warriors to remove her. Again he temporized.

"Pale Lily make talk," he said uneasily, signifying his willingness to hear her out.

"Release Leatherstocking," she demanded. "Permit him to go his way. He is a white man and a white man cannot marry an Indian woman as you wish him to do. Lead your peo-

ple back to the land of the Hurons and seek no more scalps."

"Pale Lily fool," screamed a voice from the group of warriors. "Leatherstocking die!"

Briarthorn, the renegade Delaware, reached the tree in a bound. He hurled Hetty to one side and tore the torch from Se-tah-ga's hand. With a savage cry of triumph, he set fire to the dry twigs and branches upon which the captive was standing, and red tongues of flame leaped upward. The Hurons stood aghast, awaiting some sign of divine anger at this act. Then their fear was conquered, and they leaped forward to begin their wild dance of death when beside Leatherstocking suddenly appeared a second figure, a tall, half-naked warrior who stamped out the fire and stood glaring at the fear-stricken Hurons.

"I am Chingachgook," he cried in their own tongue, "the son of Uncas and the kinsman of the great Tamenund! I command you to set Leatherstocking free!"

The fierce eyes swept the circle of savages and held them in silence. Briarthorn alone made move to put an end to the interference.

"Chingachgook is slayer of Hurons," he shrieked. "We are not safe if he escapes this time!"

The Mohican sprang at his foe, knife gleaming in his hand. Briarthorn knew he could not now avoid the reckoning that would be exacted of him and desperately he met the attack, while the Hurons crowded round to watch this fight to the death.

## CHAPTER XXII

### A NEW DAY

On and on Judith ran towards the drums that beat out their message of hope. Her breath tore at her throat, her head swam, but with will born of desperation she struggled forward.

Nearer and nearer came the martial roll and she strained her eyes to catch a glimpse of marching column she knew to be somewhere ahead of her. But on all sides the forest stretched away unbroken. She called upon all her dwindling strength and pressed on. Her foot rested for a second on a round stone that lay half hidden in moss and, with a cruel wrench, the slender ankle turned. A moan of pain escaped from the white lips, and Judith sank to the ground.

With tantalizing persistence, the sound of the drums grew louder. Oh, for the strength, the fortitude to withstand the agony for a few seconds longer!

It was to save his life—his life and Hetty's!

No sacrifice could be too great for that. All else must be forgotten! She must go on!

Judith grasped the branch of a tree in convulsive fingers and pulled herself up on one foot. Gently she rested the other on the ground and attempted to take a step. The pain was unbearable and again she sank down sobbing. She had failed—failed in the very face of the goal she sought, for there through the woods, a hundred yards ahead, there flashed into view a crimson line of British soldiery. Four drummer boys were beating out the roll that had become as a part of Judith's consciousness, and in an agony of fear that they might pass unaware of her presence she cried out her appeal for help. Then, on hands and knees, she crawled towards the red-coats.

Since daybreak the detachment of British riflemen had been plodding through the woods north of Glimmerglass in an effort to reach the most westerly of the Mohawk River outposts by sundown of the next day. This forced march through a wilderness that was probably hostile was to the liking of neither officers nor men, but they were on His Majesty's service and consequently their grumbling amounted to nothing.

Colonel Henry Munro, in command, newly

arrived in the colonies as was evidenced by his permission of the Old World practice of rolling drums even in the country of the savage enemy, rode steadily forward, bored beyond words at the monotony of the landscape. Trees, trees, everywhere he looked and no sound save the rat-ta-tat from the head of the column.

Suddenly a woman's scream rang out, and the Colonel stiffened in his saddle.

"Did you hear that, Lieutenant?" he asked brusquely of the young officer at his side.

"Yes, sir," came the answer.

"Well, well, what was it?" snapped Munro.

"A woman, sir, I think."

"A woman, you think," roared the Colonel. "Not a doubt of it! But where is she and why did she cry out?"

The perplexed Lieutenant stood in his stirrups and peered in the direction from which the cry had come. There through the trees an object was moving towards him. It was a woman, and she was crawling on hands and knees.

"There, sir," he cried, pointing.

"I see her," came back the curt answer. "Dismount and help her. She seems to be wounded."

Hardly waiting to salute, the Lieutenant

leaped from his horse and, calling to two of his men to follow him, he plunged into the underbrush. In a few moments they reached Judith's side, and the young man knelt down beside her.

"Oh, for God's sake, hurry," she sobbed. "The Indians—they're killing a white man back there by the lake!"

She clutched his arm frantically and tried to stand, but the pain was too great.

"Pick her up," he ordered.

The soldiers lifted Judith and ran back with her to Munro, to whom the Lieutenant was reporting her plea for help.

"Take her up on your saddle," the Colonel commanded. "She can tell us where these Indians are."

"Straight through the forest to the lake," Judith broke in, "then along the shore."

"Forward, double quick," came the order, and into the thicket the detachment plunged.

The cries of the Hurons grew in volume and fierceness as Chingachgook grappled with Briarthorn and crushed him to the ground. His great strength seemed to assume superhuman proportions, and the treacherous Delaware writhed in vain to free himself from this awful embrace. Slowly the Mohican raised his knife

and Briarthorn fought desperately to stay the hand that held it, but his doom was already sealed. The hand wrenched itself free and the blade was poised for a second above him. Then it descended with terrible swiftness and, with a choking cry, he shuddered and lay still.

Chingachgook was on his feet in an instant surrounded by the furious Hurons. Warily he backed away from them until he reached the tree. One slash of his blade and the thongs that held Leatherstocking were severed. For a moment his eyes left the oncoming savages as behind them a crimson line of soldiers broke through the forest.

A word of command rang out, and forty rifles crashed as one.

"The British!" cried Leatherstocking. "We're saved!"

Dumfounded at the suddenness of the attack, the Hurons scattered, leaving a dozen or more dead and wounded on the ground. But they were not destined to escape, for another volley roared out and took its toll.

Rivenoak screamed and shrieked at his demoralized warriors, and they paused long enough to reply to the British fire. With rifles and arrows, they attempted to stem the ad-

vance of the red-coats, but in vain. On came the hated Yengees.

Hetty, who had crouched behind a tree when Se-tah-ga set the torch to the funeral pyre, now ran out into the open. She had seen Judith, who was seated on a log well out of range of the contending forces and, heedless of the danger, she started across the clearing towards her sister. A scattering volley came from the remnants of the Hurons, and Hetty staggered forward. Her hand clutched at her side and she sank softly to the ground.

Chingachgook sprang to her and, lifting her carefully, bore her to the spot where Judith and Leatherstocking were clasped in each other's arms.

"Pale Lily hurt," he cried.

Judith screamed in horror as she saw the pitiful burden Chingachgook held. She reached out blindly in her grief and unconsciousness mercifully came to her relief.

. . . . . .

The first rays of the sun were just touching Glimmerglass when Hetty Hutter struggled back to consciousness. She was in her old room in Muskrat Castle. Beside her were Judith and Leatherstocking, and nearer the window she

could make out the forms of Chingachgook and Wah-ta-Wah.

A stranger, a tall man in army uniform, was bending over her. As he rose, she looked at the grave face in an effort to recognize him, but her eyes wandered.

"Judith," she called softly, "where are you?"

"Right beside you, dear," came the answer, and there was a sob in the voice.

Hetty stretched out a hand and felt weakly for the hand of her sister. Finding it, she sighed and sank back.

"Judith," she murmured, "I'm so very tired. I want to go to sleep—let me hold your hand."

Judith tried to speak, but her voice failed her. She pressed the white hand to her lips, and her tears blinded her.

"It's growing dark." Hetty's voice was little more than a whisper. "I'm not afraid—Judith, I—I love—you—so—"

The words ceased. A gentle sigh and Hetty Hutter passed into the darkness that but precedes the dawn of a new day.

. . . . . .

Once more the waters of Glimmerglass had opened and received a Hutter to eternal rest. In her deep sorrow, Judith turned her back

on Muskrat Castle and faced the shore towards which Leatherstocking was paddling the canoe. The forest was now free of the Huron menace and again peace and quiet bestowed their blessings so long withheld.

As her feet touched the beach, Judith cast one last look at the Castle. It stood like a monument over the three who slept beneath the waves—a mother she did not remember, a kind protector she had looked on as father, and a sister whose gentle soul had brought so much sweetness to this desolate abode. In the distance she saw the canoe in which Chingachgook was bearing his beloved Wah-ta-Wah back to the land of his people.

"Dearest," she said as Leatherstocking's arms encircled her, "I never want to see this spot again, but promise me that when the end comes, you will put me to rest out there where they are."

His lips were pressed against hers and his arms pressed her to him.

"When the end comes," he said, " 'twill serve as a restin' place for us both."

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